



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Eighty-seventh session

### Summary record of the 2042nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 6 February 2024, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Bethel (Vice-Chair)

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(continued)

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*In the absence of Ms. Peláez Narváez, Ms. Bethel (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

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

*Combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Greece (continued)*

([CEDAW/C/GRC/8-9](#); [CEDAW/C/GRC/QPR/8](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Greece joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Dimadama** (Greece) said that, after lengthy discussions, legislation calling for gender parity on candidate lists for national and European elections had set a target of 40 per cent of the candidates being female, as a target of 50 per cent had been considered too ambitious.
3. **A representative of Greece** said that the State party's reservation to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reflected national and European Union legislation providing for differences of treatment according to the nature of particular occupational activities.
4. **A representative of Greece** said that some €11.6 million had been allocated to the operation of shelters for victims of gender-based violence between 2016 and 2023, while counselling centres had received nearly €9.7 million and other activities had received over €3 million. Funding for such activities was secure, with the State contributing about 20 per cent of the overall budget, and an assessment was scheduled for the end of 2025.
5. The Government did not believe it was necessary to criminalize femicide as a distinct offence, as it was covered by an article of the Criminal Code. The Code would soon be amended to align its provisions relating to domestic violence with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).
6. The police had noted a major increase in reports of domestic violence, which in 2022 had stood at 10,131, compared with 1,630 in 2012. The General Secretariat for Demography, Family Policy and Gender Equality had introduced specific measures for the protection of women, such as the use of a smartphone panic button application for women victims of domestic violence. Eighty-one women currently had the application installed, and 217 alerts had been sent to the police using the application. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the General Secretariat had ensured continuity of access to the national support network for victims of gender-based violence. Network staff had received guidelines on teleworking and recommendations on remote case management and data protection. Staff had continued to offer their services either remotely or in person while taking measures to prevent virus transmission.

*Articles 10–14*

7. **A representative of Greece** said that a law on living harmoniously had been introduced in 2023, accompanied by regulations to prevent and tackle violence and bullying in primary and secondary education, and a committee had been established to evaluate and develop protocols for dealing with incidents of school violence and bullying. A nationwide anti-bullying campaign would commence in March 2024. Psychosocial support was provided to address school dropout from vulnerable social groups. In its educational activities, the Government aimed to ensure the healthy psychosocial development of refugee children, in addition to achieving learning goals. For example, the education system had responded to the influx of Ukrainian students by stepping up cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support their social and emotional needs with the help of psychologists and social workers at UNICEF creative activity centres. UNICEF had also helped non-governmental organizations (NGOs) establish telephone and in-person interpretation services to overcome the language barrier, and bilingual handbooks had been distributed to assist with enrolment procedures.

8. The employment rates of female graduates between the ages of 20 and 34 had increased from 44.1 per cent in 2015 to 66.5 per cent in 2022. The Government had been implementing a Strategic Action Plan for Equal Access to Education for Students with Disabilities, and an amendment introduced in 2021 to the legislation on education had given supportive educational structures a more inclusive orientation. Members of the Muslim minority were able to attend Islamic religious schools and public secondary schools. The number of Islamic religion teachers who were women was 24 (out of 90) in the 2023/24 school year. A law adopted in 2022 had broadened the scope of activity of gender equality committees so that they could also address issues of sexism, sexual harassment and any other forms of harassment within their institutions. All of the country's 24 higher education institutions had established such committees, and 22 had developed action plans. State scholarships were awarded based primarily on excellence and financial situation; gender was excluded as a consideration.

9. **A representative of Greece** said that in 2023, 15 existing curricula had been revised and 35 new curricula produced, and a guide had been published for the integration of the gender perspective in curricula and teaching material. Recently published guidelines specified that content in textbooks must promote acceptance and respect for diversity and refrain from reproducing stereotypes or instilling bias, including through sexist references or offences against sexual dignity. Sexual education and its relation with human rights was included into the Skills Labs initiative, which involved the teaching of knowledge and critical thinking, as well as life skills relating to gender and human rights and means of combating discrimination and gender-based violence.

10. To ensure cooperation with local communities, an evaluation and approval process had been established for educational programmes. It had been designed in cooperation with the social partners, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations. The educational programmes aimed to educate and empower students and raise their awareness of subjects such as human rights, social inclusion and equal opportunities and of the need to address issues such as violence, aggression and discrimination, including gender stereotypes. To promote the choice of non-traditional fields of education and career paths for women and girls, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and information and communications technology, leadership and vocational guidance had been integrated as core subjects in the Skills Labs initiative. A primary goal was the deconstruction of stereotypes that characterized specific professional groups.

11. **Ms. Dimadama** (Greece) said that a pilot programme had been launched at the start of 2024 in Athens and Thessaloniki to address the issue of poverty and its relation to absence from school among girls. It had targeted 200 girls, distributing a large number of hygiene products. A campaign had been launched to educate girls about menstruation and encourage them to stay in school.

12. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she would like to know whether an impact assessment had been conducted on gender mainstreaming in curricula. How extensively had gender committees been established in schools? She would also be grateful if the delegation could provide more information on how aspects of sexual education relating to human rights and power were being taught.

13. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would like to know if the delegation could provide current data on the employment rate of women with disabilities and information on any tangible impacts of the job subsidy schemes and public recruitment quotas. He also wished to know what strategies the State party was implementing to address the discrepancy between men and women in terms of unpaid work and to minimize gender-based barriers to career progression for women. He would appreciate it if the delegation could provide information on the representation of women from minorities, particularly the Roma and Turkish minorities. What programmes had the State party implemented to increase the number of women from national minorities in the labour market?

14. He wondered if the delegation could provide data on court decisions on cases involving sexual violence in the workplace. He noted that the Criminal Code defined sexual abuse as a crime and said that he would like to find out when the State party would apply specific liability for the violation of sexual dignity as a crime. Would doing so require a

change in legislation, or implementation of the existing law? He would like to find out if the State party provided for future parents to take maternity and paternity leave with pay or comparable social benefits, without risking the loss of employment. He would also welcome information on how the State party addressed the gender pension gap.

15. **A representative of Greece** said that, according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority, the unemployment rate in 2023 had fallen to 11.2 per cent, compared with 12.3 per cent in 2022. However, the female unemployment rate was almost double that of men. The low participation of women in the labour market had a significant impact on productivity. Lack of availability of quality care services for children and older people were major barriers to female labour market participation. The prevalence of women in the education, health and social work sectors was nearly three times higher than the prevalence of men. The gender pay gap had decreased by about two percentage points between 2015 and 2021, when it had stood at 10.4 per cent. Data for 2022 would be available at the end of 2024. Specific actions had been incorporated into both the previous and the current National Action Plan on Gender Equality to strengthen women's employment. For example, companies that implemented gender equality policies had received awards. A project called Pegasus had examined the issue of the gender pension gap and had made policy proposals.

16. **A representative of Greece** said that legislation permitted up to 14 days of paternity leave for biological, adoptive and foster fathers, and in 2023 such leave had been taken by over 14,500 men. Some 6,500 employers had granted leave, which was on average a little over 12 days long. Parental leave was equal to the minimum statutory salary, in addition to a proportion of Christmas and Easter bonuses and an allowance for leave. Single parents were entitled to double the duration and allowance of parental leave.

17. Caregivers could take up to five days of unpaid leave annually. A working parent or caregiver could take leave up to twice a year for urgent family reasons. Any working parent or caregiver of children up to 12 years of age was entitled to request flexible working arrangements for caregiving purposes. Entitlements for working foster mothers of children up to 8 years of age were identical to those for biological mothers. Seven working days of paid leave were available for medically assisted reproduction treatments. Employers were prohibited from dismissing a working father for a period of six months after childbirth.

18. The Government had broadened the scope of annual leave with pay for single-parent families, from six to eight working days. The right to one day of paid leave annually for a gynaecological examination had also been extended to include workers in the private sector. In the event of the death of a child, workers were entitled to 20 days of unconditional paid leave. A special maternity protection leave and benefit, applicable to certain groups of workers, had been increased from six to nine months, and mothers were able to transfer up to seven months of such entitlements to the father. One of the thrusts of the national strategy for active labour market policies from 2022 to 2030 was aimed at tackling unemployment, including long-term unemployment, which affected women disproportionately. The national strategy for youth employment 2021–2027 also included measures to address the gender gap.

19. **A representative of Greece** said that the Public Employment Service had implemented a number of employment programmes with an emphasis on women and vulnerable social groups such as victims of gender-based violence. The programmes focused on providing subsidies to employers to assist with coverage of the wage and non-wage costs of hiring people from such target groups. They were funded by the State, with some assistance from the European Social Fund of the European Union. Programmes focused on themes such as ergonomic adaptation of the workplace for disabled workers, the creation of private sector jobs for workers faced with the greatest labour market barriers, development of the green economy sector, hiring of persons over 30 years of age and assistance for freelance workers. The respective programmes aimed to ensure employment for between 2,900 and 10,000 people from the target groups.

20. **A representative of Greece** said that efforts were made to ensure that all dependent family members had access to social care facilities so that women would not have to abandon their careers owing to care responsibilities. The Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family subsidized early education centres and, since 2018, had allocated €10 million as part of a funding programme to allow municipalities to establish 300 new centres. Low-income

families were provided with vouchers to cover childcare expenses through a programme co-financed by the national Government and the European Social Fund. For the period September 2023 to July 2024, the programme's budget totalled €341 million, and the Government's contribution to the programme had doubled between 2022 and 2024. A budget of €70 million would be allocated under the Recovery and Resilience Facility to a new programme to increase the number of early childcare centres for babies and infants aged up to 2 years and 6 months. The Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family had begun devising a national strategy to ensure access to affordable and high-quality long-term care, in line with a recommendation by the Council of the European Union. The strategy would also cover professional development and training for caregivers and would be implemented in coordination with the relevant ministries.

21. **A representative of Greece** said that an independent department had been established to monitor violence and harassment in the world of work. The powers of the Labour Inspectorate in handling incidents of violence and harassment had been expanded under a law adopted in 2021, and special sanctions could now be imposed on employers that neglected their obligations to take action. The Ombudsman had been designated as the independent authority responsible for ensuring respect for the principle of equal opportunities, and a special scheme had been set up for cooperation between the Labour Inspectorate and the Ombudsman's office.

22. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would appreciate it if the delegation could provide figures on the number of court cases and investigations concerning sexual harassment in the workplace in the decade since the previous report. He wondered what progress had been made towards the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). It would be useful to know how many women with disabilities were in employment and what programmes had been introduced to increase that number.

23. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that she would be interested to learn how men were involved in efforts to increase the participation and representation of women and eliminate gender stereotypes in the political sphere.

24. **A representative of Greece** said that 24 per cent of women with disabilities were employed, which was slightly higher than the employment rate of men with disabilities.

25. **A representative of Greece** said that the Government had not ratified ILO Convention No. 189 owing to legal impediments, including the constitutional safeguard on the inviolability of the home. Homes where persons were employed could only be inspected under the circumstances established by law and in the presence of representatives of the judicial authority. The current legislative framework provided social protections for domestic workers. Between 2018 and 2022, the Labour Inspectorate had handled 20 labour disputes involving such workers. Those with employment contracts and whose employers contributed to the National Social Security Fund were entitled to Christmas and Easter bonuses and holiday allowances, and that entitlement had been upheld in a 2017 Supreme Court decision. However, provisions on working time did not apply to domestic workers who lived in the employer's home. Ratification of ILO Convention No. 189 was currently not a priority for the Government or for the social partners, which were instead focusing on ratification of other ILO fundamental and governance instruments, such as the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129).

26. A new legislative provision had been adopted in December 2023 to help undocumented migrants access formal employment, with a view to addressing labour shortages and reducing recourse to the informal economy. Approximately 30,000 such migrants, including a large number of women working in the services sector, were expected to benefit from the measure. Asylum-seekers could also benefit, subject to certain conditions.

27. **A representative of Greece** said that personal assistants were provided to persons with disabilities as part of the State's pilot initiative to help women with disabilities live independently and enter the labour market. The initiative also enabled women carers of persons with disabilities to reintegrate into the world of work and had introduced regulations

for the long-term care market. A budget of €40 million had been allocated to the initiative, which was expected to benefit some 2,000 persons with disabilities.

28. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that she wished to know what percentage of total public spending was allocated to women's health and whether that percentage would increase in the near future. She wondered whether rural, Roma and migrant women and girls were entitled to free human papillomavirus vaccines and tests for the early detection of breast and cervical cancer on an equal footing with other women and girls, and what steps were being taken to guarantee them access to those services. More than half of all babies were reportedly delivered by caesarean section, and she wished to know whether that was due to the choice of the mothers or public policy. It would be useful to know what measures, such as targeted campaigns to raise awareness of contraception among adolescents, were being taken to prevent teenage pregnancy.

29. She wondered what specific measures, other than those implemented under the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, had been carried out to ensure the accessibility of hospitals and health centres for girls with disabilities. She wished to know how many pregnant or breastfeeding migrants or refugees were being held in detention; how the State party ensured that women and girls in detention centres, and especially pregnant women, had adequate access to food and water; what measures were being implemented to ensure that pregnant or breastfeeding women had adequate access to the necessary hygiene facilities and products; and what action was being taken to provide comprehensive assistance, including prenatal and postnatal care, to migrant women. She would be interested to learn how the State party intended to reduce the number of AIDS-related deaths, prevent the use of non-consensual blood tests of sex workers at police stations and ensure that medical procedures were carried out in a timely manner.

30. **A representative of Greece** said that the total health budget for 2024 was €12.8 billion, an increase of €900 million compared with 2023. A further €1.5 billion was available from a health recovery fund to address a wide range of health-care needs, including those arising as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Health had set four priority goals: to improve the health of the country's population, to address inequalities in access to health services, to enhance the productivity and quality of health services and to leverage the national health system for social and economic development. Under the National Action Plan for Mental Health for 2021–2030, the Ministry intended to establish new psychological, mental health and counselling support services for minors and older persons who suffered from chronic diseases and for their family members.

31. Mobile health units would be deployed on a regular basis to provide primary and preventive health care in all remote areas as part of a programme launched for the period 2021–2025. A programme to prevent breast cancer targeted women holding social security accounts who were between 50 and 69 years old and facilitated access for them to free examinations using digital technology. Within the first three months of the programme's launch, over 50,000 mammograms had been performed and approximately 3,400 women had received early diagnoses.

32. In 2022 a law had been passed to promote natural childbirth and midwife care at home. It had been adopted partially in response to the significant proportion of women who opted to give birth by caesarean section. Under the law, birthing centres had been established in public and private hospitals, and in-house obstetric services monitored the physical and mental health of the mother during pregnancy and childbirth. Midwives' associations throughout the country provided home-based care and information to pregnant women on natural childbirth, and the Hellenic Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology had published guidance on the subject.

33. Pursuant to the Criminal Code, artificial termination was permitted within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, or 19 weeks if the pregnancy had been the result of rape, incest or coercion, if the mother was a minor or if there were serious indications of a fetal abnormality. Termination without the woman's consent was punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment.

34. **A representative of Greece** said that reception facilities for asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants had safe zones specifically for pregnant women, and unaccompanied minors were held in separate areas. A psychological and medical care unit was available at every

facility, midwives provided prenatal and postnatal care and special rooms were available for mothers to breastfeed their children. Guardians appointed by NGOs supported children through their asylum claims and during interviews, and recreational areas were provided for them. Reception centres were not detention centres. They were run by the Reception and Identification Service.

35. **A representative of Greece** said that policies had been introduced to contain the spread of HIV and address the issues faced by persons living with HIV/AIDS. Under Greek law, discrimination against HIV-positive citizens in the areas of social protection, social insurance, education, taxation, access to goods and services or employment was expressly prohibited. A designated patient register had been created for people living with HIV/AIDS to allow them to receive electronic prescriptions for antiretroviral drugs for both therapy and pre-exposure prophylaxis. Persons undergoing HIV treatment were entitled to become foster parents and access medically assisted reproduction facilities.

36. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she wished to know what measures had been adopted under the national action plans on gender equality since 2016 to promote the economic empowerment of single mothers, women with disabilities, refugee and asylum-seeking women, older women and Roma women, and what budgets had been allocated to promote women's empowerment and guarantee equal opportunities. She would be interested to hear about the outcome of any evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of microcredit initiatives over the previous decade. She wondered what percentage of the €550 million European Investment Bank loan to support growth and employment had been earmarked for women entrepreneurs, whether the support included educational and social assistance for women entrepreneurs and corporate leaders and what the criteria were for granting loans. Was special consideration given to rural women, single mothers, women with disabilities and women from minority groups? It would be helpful to know how the State party planned to leverage innovation and digitalization for the economic empowerment of women and to reduce poverty among vulnerable groups, including women with disabilities and older women.

37. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that she would appreciate updated information on the number of female farmers, the specific grants available to help rural women acquire property and livestock and the programmes that had been launched to support women and girls who had been affected by climate change, in particular economically. She wondered how many Roma women and girls there were in Greece and whether the State party would consider reviewing census procedures and questions in order to facilitate identification of women belonging to linguistic, religious and ethnic minority groups. The Committee would like to know what steps the State party had taken to ensure that migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls were protected from violence; what mechanisms were in place to monitor the authorities and hold them accountable when they engaged in rights abuses, including sexual harassment, physical violence and the withholding of food and water; and whether the State party had plans to address practices that might constitute secret or incommunicado detention. She wondered how many women and girls at migrant reception centres had unconditional access to family members, a lawyer and an independent physician; what action had been taken to ensure that they were informed of their rights; and what mechanisms existed to allow them to report violence and abuse and to seek legal remedies for them.

38. **A representative of Greece** said that, although banks provided information on the financial credit they extended to entrepreneurs, the data were not disaggregated by gender. Following the enactment of a new law in 2020, three institutions were now licensed by the Bank of Greece to provide microcredit. At the end of 2023, plans had been announced to create a microcredit fund exclusively for female entrepreneurs. The Greek Innovation Lab for Women had recently established a business arm that sought to promote entrepreneurship among women, chiefly by providing consultancy and mentoring services on digitalization projects. Among the new businesses launched in 2022, 23 per cent were owned by women.

39. **A representative of Greece** said that the State had a national strategy for social inclusion and poverty reduction for the period 2021–2027. The strategy envisaged targeted actions for specific groups, including older women and women with disabilities. Between 2010 and 2024, poverty rates among women had consistently surpassed those among men, although the gap had narrowed and now stood at 19.4 per cent for women and 18.2 per cent

for men. The poverty rate among older persons had declined from a high of 28 per cent in 2004 to 12 per cent in 2018; it currently stood at 15.8 per cent.

40. In May 2023, welfare benefits for persons with disabilities had increased by 8 per cent. The benefits were not counted as income, and therefore had no influence on any other means-tested benefits to which the recipients were entitled. The Government was developing an overarching strategy for persons with disabilities for the period 2024–2030. Women over the age of 65 were eligible for a housing allowance and, if they were uninsured, for social solidarity payments of up to €360 per month.

41. As a way of combating extreme poverty, a minimum guaranteed income had been introduced in February 2017, and the principle that the State should guarantee minimum income levels for its citizens had since been enshrined in a 2019 revision of the Constitution. The minimum guaranteed income, which had been increased by 8 per cent in December 2023, currently stood at €216 per month. Some 200,000 applications had been approved, 47 per cent of which were from women. The minimum guaranteed income was originally intended for households, but since 2021 it had also been available to women victims of violence living in shelters. When such women then left the shelters and entered the labour market, they continued to receive the income for a period of one year as a way of supporting their transition back into the community.

42. **A representative of Greece** said that the Hellenic Police had provided clear orders and guidelines to all its personnel who dealt with refugees and asylum-seekers concerning the importance of strict adherence to the principle of non-refoulement. Particular attention was paid to migrant women and children, and no third country nationals who applied for international protection were expelled until their applications for asylum had been duly processed. Acting on recommendations received from international bodies, the police took robust measures to combat arbitrary actions on the part of officers and thus to promote a culture in which human rights were protected. The Ministry of Migration and Asylum had recently created a new post under the title of fundamental rights officers, whose job it was to receive complaints concerning any violations that might arise during asylum procedures.

43. **A representative of Greece** said that once they had examined the complaints, the fundamental rights officers forwarded them to the National Transparency Authority. The Ministry of Migration and Asylum had also established a committee to monitor compliance with national, European and international asylum legislation.

44. **Ms. Dimadama** (Greece) said that, in Greece, as in the rest of Europe, the disaggregation of data tended to focus on sex and age. The State collected sex-disaggregated data on the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Disaggregation by disability was less prevalent but was improving, while disaggregation by racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender identity tended to be less common. The Government was working with the Hellenic Statistical Authority, an independent body, to improve the scope and quality of statistics.

45. **A representative of Greece** said that Roma persons were not registered as such in Greece. The Government therefore relied on other criteria when collecting data, including self-identification. A nationwide mapping of Roma settlements had been conducted in 2021. Over 140 municipalities had participated, and the resulting data would shortly be published online. The process had revealed that there were around 120,000 Roma persons in Greece, accounting for about 1.13 per cent of the population. Of them, 34.3 per cent were children under 15 and 33.6 per cent were women. The mapping exercise was due to be repeated – with further disaggregation of data and information on the socioeconomic characteristics of the Roma population – as part of the Roma Platform project 2023–2025, with funding from the European Union.

46. **Ms. Dimadama** (Greece) said that a recently created task force had reported that women were three times more likely than men to suffer the impact of natural disasters and climate change. That state of affairs was due to women's weaker economic position with respect to men and their lack of the skills required to overcome such challenges. The Government was working closely with NGOs and other stakeholders to empower women, also with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.



47. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that, although she recognized that Greece was disproportionately affected by irregular migration, the Committee remained highly concerned about reports of persons being held in secret or improvised facilities, such as stables or derelict railway stations. It was important to remember that migrants could not be summarily expelled, even if they had entered the country illegally.

*Articles 15 and 16*

48. **The Chair** said that she wished to know if a follow-up study had been conducted into the intended and unintended gender-related consequences of the adoption in 2021 of the new family law. The delegation was requested to inform the Committee whether, following recent amendments to that law, women were forced to undergo mediation even when there was a suspicion of domestic violence. Did the amendments envisage training on domestic violence for judges who dealt with family disputes? The Committee wished to know whether mothers were accused of “bad exercise of parental care” if their children refused to be in contact with the father or if other reasons for such refusal were investigated. It would be interesting to receive separate statistics on the number of mothers and fathers who were considered to be exercising their parental responsibilities badly and to find out what sanctions they faced. She wished to know why the State did not adopt a rule whereby property was divided equally in the event of divorce or death. To do so might enable women to leave a marriage, including an abusive marriage, without fear of poverty. She invited the delegation to provide statistics on divorce and parental separation as risk factors for poverty among women and children.

49. The Committee welcomed the change to the law under which recourse to a mufti in matters of marriage, divorce or inheritance was now possible only when the respective parties agreed to apply Islamic law. She wondered what measures were taken to inform Muslim girls and women that they could refuse the authority of a religious tribunal and turn to a civil court. It would be helpful if the delegation could provide statistics on how many persons still opted for a mufti to resolve family matters and how many times the civil courts had overturned a mufti’s judgment that discriminated against girls or women. She hoped also to receive data, disaggregated by sex, on how many persons under the age of 18 were in a marriage recognized by the State. In the light of the fact that the Hanafi school of Islamic law, which was recognized in Greece, currently permitted marriage for children as young as 15 years of age, she wished to know what steps were being taken to ensure that girls were protected from non-consensual child marriages.

50. **A representative of Greece** said that recourse to a mufti was optional. Although no specific data were available, a very large majority of Muslim families apparently preferred to use the civil courts. Muftis were required to respect the Constitution and the law in their rulings, which in any case were only enforceable once they had been endorsed by a civil court. In most cases, that endorsement was forthcoming and, when the courts did overturn a ruling, it was usually on grounds of jurisdiction rather than substance.

51. **A representative of Greece** said that the prerequisites for a valid marriage, including the age of the parties, were set forth in the Civil Code, and no exceptions were permitted. With a view to preventing early marriages in the Roma community, measures had been taken to empower Roma children, particularly girls, to ensure that they were able to complete their compulsory education. More than 27,000 Roma pupils had benefited from those measures. Efforts were also made to integrate Roma persons into the workforce. As part of a project to fund young entrepreneurs from marginalized social groups, 400 Roma persons had received €15,000 each to start their own businesses, while a further 500 had received funding to pursue technical training. Such projects were approved only if they met certain criteria relating to the gender of beneficiaries.

52. **A representative of Greece** said that the new family law had given rise to concerns relating to custody and visitation rights in cases of domestic violence. Custody arrangements had to take account of the best interests of the child, which, according to the Civil Code, generally meant that both parents should be involved in the upbringing of their children. Nonetheless, the Code did offer possibilities to suspend or limit the rights of parents accused of abuse against a spouse or child, and the requirement to undertake mediation before initiating civil proceedings included an exception in cases of domestic violence. In any case,

the limitation or deprivation of parental rights required a separate procedure under civil law and could not be imposed as a supplementary sanction in the case of a criminal conviction.

53. According to the Civil Code, each parent had an obligation to foster good relations between the child and the other parent, and the ability of the parents to safeguard each other's rights in their relationship with the child was one of the criteria used in assessing the child's best interests. Moreover, the deliberate disruption by one parent of a child's emotional bond with the other could constitute grounds for the withdrawal of parental rights, including from an ostensibly non-violent parent.

54. **Ms. Stott Despoja** said that she wished to commend the State party for its admirable laws and policies. However, the implementation of those laws and policies clearly required improvement, and the Committee was happy to continue to work with the authorities to that end.

55. **Ms. Dimadama** (Greece) said that she wished to thank the Committee for the fruitful and inspiring interactive dialogue. Every effort would be made to incorporate the points raised by the Committee into everyday policy and thus bring about improvements, which she hoped would be reflected in the next periodic report.

*The meeting rose at 5 p.m.*