



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 175th MEETING

Held at the Vienna International Centre, Vienna,
on Wednesday, 23 January 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. TALLAWY

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 5) (continued) (CEDAW/C/CRP.17)

Second periodic report of Norway (CEDAW/C/13/Add.15)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Vollset and Ms. Salomon (Norway) took places at the Committee table.
2. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway), introducing her country's second periodic report (CEDAW/C/13/Add.15), pointed out that it had been submitted in 1986, and that much of the information it contained was outdated. The answers to many of the questions asked by the Committee were given in Norway's third periodic report, a draft of which was available to members at the current session.
3. In its consideration of Norway's second report, the Committee might care to bear in mind a few basic facts about the female population of the country. The life expectancy of women in Norway was 80 years, compared with 73 years for men. Seventy-two per cent of women were gainfully employed, the overall fertility rate was 1.9 children per woman and the literacy rate 100 per cent. Finally, the pension system in Norway guaranteed an acceptable minimum standard of living to the entire population, both women and men, irrespective of their earlier employment status.
4. If equal status was to be defined in purely numerical terms - in other words, in terms of equal numbers of women and men in senior posts or jobs of a certain category - Norway had made very rapid progress in some fields. However, policy discussions over recent years had led the Government to discard that purely numerical yardstick in favour of one that reflected the aspirations of most people in Norway - namely, to increase the value placed on issues and tasks which had traditionally been the concern of women, and give them the same importance as those which had traditionally been the concern of men. That change of emphasis had been confirmed by the results of the Nordic BRYT project ("Break Traditional Barriers to Educational and Employment Choice"), which had originally aimed at promoting a more even distribution of the sexes in traditionally male-dominated or female-dominated jobs. However, research had revealed that the vast majority of women actually wanted to work in traditionally female jobs, and the emphasis had, therefore, changed to improving pay and conditions in those sectors. That involved the Government in trying to resolve the disparity in wages between the public and private sectors, since large numbers of women were employed in the public sector.
5. Another important area was that of male roles and attitudes. New public policy proposals were shortly to be submitted; they were expected to deal with the rights and responsibilities of men towards their children and with proposals for research into male roles and attitudes similar to the research conducted with women over the previous 15 years.
6. There was also a growing interest in policies for those women who had not benefited from the earlier promotion of greater competition between women and men for leading positions in society and working life. However that approach raised problems, because it often focused attention on conflicts of interest between women themselves, particularly when there was any question of enhancing the economic rights of women who cared for children or elderly relatives at home.

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7. The Committee asked not only about the numbers of women taking part in political life, but also whether their presence had any effect on the decisions that were made. That was a difficult question to answer, but she could say that the new Government that had taken office in the autumn of 1990 had increased public spending in only one area, namely provision for children, including longer paid maternity leave and increased child-care facilities - areas which had traditionally been the concern of women.

8. She now wished to turn to the specific questions listed by the Committee in document CEDAW/C/CRP.17, annex III.

General questions

9. The answers to questions 1 and 2 were contained in Norway's third periodic report, which was available to members in draft form. In reply to question 3, she said that, during the 1990 round of wage settlements, the argument that many low-paid jobs were occupied by women had been successfully used to justify larger increases in the wages paid to workers in such jobs. In addition, from 1992, women who stayed at home to look after children or elderly relatives would be credited with "pension points", which would entitle them to a pension above the minimum granted to people who did not work.

10. Referring to question 4, she said that research alone was rarely used as a basis for equal status policies, although there had been close links between politicians, the civil service and researchers throughout the 1980s. For example, the research conducted by the Women's Law Institute of the University of Oslo had had a direct impact on reforms of women's pensions and other social security measures.

11. In reply to question 5, she said that quotas for women had been introduced in some areas of education and employment. Positive discrimination of that kind was permitted under the Equal Status Act, on the grounds that the difference in treatment of men and women was designed to promote greater equality of status. Positive discrimination was generally practised in the moderate form which had been found to be most acceptable to public opinion; in other words, if a male and a female candidate were found to be equal, or approximately equal, in qualifications and other respects, the underrepresented sex was to be given preference. Quotas in the proper sense of the word had been introduced in some fields of higher education; in some cases, also, extra pension points were awarded to the underrepresented sex in some professions. The measures had been successful, not only in increasing the absolute numbers of women in professions where they had been underrepresented, but also in increasing general public awareness of equality issues. Quotas had also been introduced in almost all political parties in Norway, which had substantially increased the representation of women in political life.

12. Replying to question 6, she explained that there had been protests from individual men - and, indeed, women - criticizing positive discrimination in favour of women. There had been some calls for quotas for men in traditionally female jobs; it was not clear, however, whether such a measure would be permissible under the Equal Status Act, although a forthcoming test case before the Appeals Court should make the position clearer.

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13. In reply to question 7, she said that the taxation system in Norway granted tax deductions to elderly and disabled women.

14. In connection with question 8, she noted that, according to representative time use surveys carried out in 1971 and 1981 by the Norwegian Central Bureau of Statistics, despite the increased employment of women, the time spent on domestic work by both sexes had decreased. The time spent by fathers caring for small children had increased from about 30 minutes to approximately one hour per day over the decade. More limited surveys conducted in the 1980s showed that there had been little progress towards a more equal division of domestic chores, although younger people and those with a higher education were more likely to divide tasks equally.

15. As for question 9, she pointed out that, in 1987, the average salaries of women in general (including pensioners, students and full-time and part-time workers) had been only half of those of men in the same categories. However, much of the difference was due to factors other than sex discrimination. If one were to consider only full-time workers, the average salaries of women in 1989 had been between 68 per cent and 92 per cent of those of men. The disparity between women's and men's salaries was decreasing, but very slowly.

16. Her delegation had not prepared any answer to question 10, because Norway's goals over the third reporting period were dealt with in the third periodic report. In addition, there had been many changes of government in the country during that time, and the planned review of public policy on women's issues had been repeatedly postponed.

17. In reply to question 11, she explained that the Secretariat for Research on Women was an agency of the Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities (NAVF). The Secretariat had existed for many years, but had not been accorded permanent status until 1991. It was financed by NAVF, but additional resources were provided by various ministries. At present, the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs had a seat on the board of the Secretariat, but later in 1991 that seat was to be taken over by the Ministry for Church, Education and Research.

Article 2

18. In reply to question 1, she announced that the Equal Status Act would be made available to the Committee at the current session.

19. Replying to question 2, she said that her country's third report, together with information on a number of relevant court cases regarding equal pay, would also be available during the session.

20. In answer to question 3, on violence in the family, she explained that 48 refuges and "hot-line" telephones had been established throughout the country in 1989; their distribution depended largely on the population density in various regions. All 20 counties in Norway, however, had at least one refuge for battered women. Further information could be provided on request.

21. Referring to question 4, she said that two successive national plans of action to promote equal status in Norway had been prepared, the first covering the period 1981-1985, and the second starting in 1986. The first plan had consisted of

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45 specific schemes or projects, to be implemented by a wide range of agencies, primarily in the fields of education, employment and research. Initially, it had concentrated on education and employment. Although it had succeeded in promoting wider public awareness of the issue of equal status among politicians, officials and the public at large, approximately 15 per cent of its 45 schemes had not been carried out, and many had been modified in the course of implementation, not always for the better. That was particularly true of projects regarded as controversial by the agencies responsible for their implementation, as well as projects that had not been discussed in depth with the agencies prior to their inclusion in the programme of action. In the second programme, use had been made of the experience gained, and a project had been drawn up with the aim of integrating the issue of equal status in public policy as a whole. The project was outlined in the second periodic report and in a special brochure which members of the Committee could obtain on request. In addition, the second action plan included public campaigns on a variety of relevant issues.

22. The positive results achieved reflected the fact that all the Ministries involved had found the programme worth while, and had made efforts to contribute to it, while the scope of government policy on the question of equal status had been broadened. On the other hand, it had not proved possible to achieve substantial progress - particularly in fields such as economics and industry - within the framework of a two-year programme, especially in view of the meagre resources available.

23. Replying to question 5, she observed that the mandate of the Secretariat for Research on Women entailed the recruitment of female researchers and the promotion and co-ordination of research on women. While the Secretariat was not itself involved in research, it was instrumental in disseminating the findings of the research carried out. A brochure on its activities was available.

24. With regard to question 6, she explained that the body responsible for preparing the second periodic report was the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, but that additional information on the current situation in various sectors had been provided by other ministries and certain non-governmental agencies.

25. In reply to question 7, she said that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been translated and published by the Equal Status Council in 1980, and had been disseminated as widely as possible.

Article 3

26. Referring to the question submitted, she noted that commissions, secretariats or individual posts had been created within most ministries, as well as in many public enterprises and bodies, to ensure equality between the sexes. An increasing number of private institutions, including the Federation of Trade Unions, were establishing such commissions.

Article 5

27. In reply to question 1, she said that, while it was not the policy of the Norwegian Government to interfere in the media's programming activities, the authorities did use the media to present information campaigns and educational programmes, to the extent that they were found useful and that resources were available.

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28. With regard to question 2, on the extent of co-operation between the media and the Equal Status Committee, she explained that the Board of Directors of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation had endorsed a programme of action to promote equal status within that institution. The programme indicated target figures for the proportion of men and women in certain management groups, and general instructions had been issued asking the Corporation's programme divisions to endeavour to use women staff members whenever it was appropriate to do so. The question of equal status would be included as a management training topic within the institution.

29. Attention would remain focused on the question of equal status between the sexes in international and national forums.

30. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs did not implement any policy regarding the image of women presented in the press.

31. In reply to question 3, she said it was difficult to assess trends in the incidence of violence against women, a subject to which she would revert later on in the context of article 12 of the Convention. She noted that a series of radio and television programmes elucidating that complex issue had been broadcast in 1989. Those programmes, in addition to written material for further study, had been prepared by Norsk Fjernundervisning, a body that produced adult education programmes for home study.

32. Replying to question 4, she said that violence against women, like any other violation of a person's physical integrity, was punishable under the Norwegian Penal Code, with fines or sentences of imprisonment up to a maximum of eight years, according to the gravity of the offence and the injury sustained. One important recent development was that mandatory public prosecution had been introduced in 1988 in cases of family violence.

Article 6

33. In answer to question 1, she stated that the results of the four trial projects charting prostitution in four major towns had been completed and submitted to a conference held in 1988. The project had led to greater awareness of the prevalence and nature of the problem of prostitution and of its relation to sexual abuse. A more detailed appraisal of the projects was available on request. Although statistics on the extent of prostitution were not available, she believed that it was not widespread.

34. With regard to questions 2 and 3, she explained that it was the responsibility of health and social welfare services at the local level to assist in the rehabilitation of prostitutes. Prostitutes who were also alcohol- or drug-abusers were entitled to assistance from the specialized drug treatment and rehabilitation services. An action plan launched by the central Government for the period 1988-1992 included plans for the establishment of a number of new institutions for the rehabilitation of between 300 and 350 drug-abusers per year.

35. Few specific measures for the rehabilitation of prostitutes existed in Norway, the general policy being to ensure that prostitution fell within the purview of the health and social welfare services. The municipality of Oslo,

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however, had a separate centre specifically intended for prostitutes, and a private agency had been running an eight-bed "night home" for prostitutes in Oslo.

36. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs was drafting a pamphlet on prostitution to be used by welfare personnel, and was also arranging seminars on the prostitution problem in various regions in Norway; further measures for the prevention of prostitution were under consideration.

37. In answer to question 4, she said that the results of research on prostitution had been publicized in books and in films, and that one of the tangible results of the Trondheim project had been the establishment of a support sector for incest victims. It was unlikely that the legislature would envisage criminalization of the prostitute's client, in view of its reluctance to treat prostitutes and clients differently.

38. Referring to question 5, she pointed out that dissemination of information, as well as other activities to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, had been aimed mainly at specific target groups, namely, male homosexuals, drug-abusers and prostitutes. Peer education among prostitutes had been fairly successful and an "AIDS Information Bus" had been providing disposable needles, condoms and general information on AIDS in the streets of the capital at night. Extensive information campaigns, posters and newspaper advertisements, concentrating on young people in particular, had also been used. A scheme was at present being developed by the Directorate of Health for preventive work in the field of venereal diseases, with women as a major target group. HIV was increasing in the heterosexual population, and 70 per cent of infected heterosexuals were women. Of 939 HIV-infected persons registered in December 1990, 202 were women, representing 22 per cent of the total. Of the 176 persons who had developed AIDS, 16 were women, accounting for 9 per cent of the total.

Article 7

39. With respect to question 1, she said the total percentage of women on civic committees had risen from 27 per cent in 1983 to 35 per cent in 1989. In 1988, 43 per cent of newly appointed members had been women, but in 1989 that figure had fallen to 39 per cent.

40. Replying to questions 2 and 3 together, she drew attention to answers given in respect of earlier questions. Prospects had changed in political life. The effect of increased women's representation was the subject of a doctorate now nearing completion.

41. Ms. CORTI, taking up the question of quotas that had been raised earlier, asked whether figures for political parties were available. She also wondered whether public financing was available for women's organizations and political parties and whether any proportion of the latter was allocated to women's organizations.

42. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway) said that as a general rule the quota in political parties was 40 per cent for either sex. In recent years a sum of Nkr 20,000 had been given to each of the women's organizations; political parties received much larger amounts, some of which was turned over to women's organizations.

43. The CHAIRPERSON felt that that information might usefully be distributed in written form.

Article 8

44. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway), replying to question 1, said that of Norway's 72 missions and embassies around the world, only three, or 4.1 per cent, were headed by a woman ambassador. As for question 2, she noted that in 1989 29 per cent of all civil servants in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been women. Eight per cent of senior civil servants and 44 per cent of civil servants at lower levels were women.

45. Since the mid-1970s, the Ministry had targeted women in its recruitment advertisements of diplomatic courses, which provided the basis for a career in the Ministry. In recent years, between 40 and 50 per cent of those accepted for the course had been women, as had 40 to 45 per cent of persons applying. In view of the internal promotion system, it would be some time before those figures were reflected at the most senior levels.

46. In reply to question 3, she observed that the Ministry had no statistics for Norwegian personnel working in international organizations. Norway financed 40 junior expert posts in the United Nations of which 15, or 37 per cent, were occupied by women. The number of women applicants for those posts had increased in recent years and once again, women were specifically targeted in advertisements.

Article 9

47. After apologizing for the misleading information given in the report in respect of article 9, she explained that, according to the Norwegian Nationality Act of 1950, women had the same rights as men with regard to obtaining, changing or retaining their citizenship. Marriage did not in itself affect the right to Norwegian citizenship. A 1979 amendment to the Act stated that the child of a Norwegian mother became a Norwegian citizen at birth; it could also become a Norwegian citizen at birth if the father was a Norwegian citizen and the parents were married. Further information on the subject was contained in Norway's third periodic report.

Article 10

48. Replying to question 1, she said that there were no overall statistics on drop-out rates. Two critical phases had been identified in vocational training, namely, the first few weeks, or initial phase, and that of securing an apprenticeship contract. Measures had been taken to reduce the first-phase problems that arose due to unfamiliarity with cultural concepts; they included introductory courses for girls prior to training proper, putting all girls in a single group, the organization of mutual support groups, contacts with women working in non-traditional occupations, and separate classes for girls.

49. Girls were reported to experience more difficulty than boys in obtaining apprenticeship contracts. Once a contract was obtained, their drop-out rates were only marginally higher than those of boys. At university level, 25 per cent of those who had obtained a higher degree in 1982 had been women. In 1988, 39 per cent of university and college students obtaining higher degrees, and 61 per cent of those obtaining lower degrees, had been women.

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50. In reply to question 2, she said that the programme had been launched in conjunction with the Second Plan of Action for Equality, as stated in Norway's second periodic report. At the present time, the Ministry of Church and Education Affairs was responsible for monitoring.

Article 11

51. Referring to question 1, she observed that many women worked part time in order to devote more time to the family, a fact that reflected a lack not only of adequate child-care arrangements but also of choice. Research had shown that women who entered the labour market on a part-time basis continued to work part time regardless of changing child-care obligations, and that the reverse was also true, namely, that once established in full-time employment, women tended to continue to work full time throughout the various phases of the family cycle. However, an increasing number of younger women chose to work full time. The provisions of the Working Environment Act, which governed health and safety in the work-place, were the same for part-time workers as for full-time workers. Part-time employees were also entitled to social security and pension benefits under the National Insurance Scheme, and benefits were related to salaries. Hourly pay and job training were regulated by agreements between employers' and employees' organizations. Part-time workers were entitled to paid annual leave. Copies of the Working Environment Act could be made available if required, in accordance with the request contained in question 2.

52. Replying to question 3, she stated that working conditions for domestic workers were governed by a separate Act of 13 May 1963 and its 1968 amendments. That Act was currently under review for possible incorporation into the Working Environment Act.

53. In reply to question 4, she explained that the capacity of child-care facilities still fell well short of demand, although the situation had improved considerably over the years. The Government had given the matter high priority and special measures were being introduced to encourage the development of child-care facilities with a view to providing places for all children requiring such care. Additional information was contained in Norway's third periodic report. In 1984, 26 per cent of children were placed in private or public kindergartens, on a part-time, half-time or all-day basis. The corresponding figures had been 29 per cent in 1986, 32 per cent in 1988 and 34 per cent in 1989. As far as pre-school children (0-6 years) were concerned, in 1989, 10 per cent of one-year-olds, 38 per cent of three-year-olds and 70 per cent of six-year-olds had kindergarten places.

54. Turning to question 5, she said that the text of the Agreement between the Norwegian Employers' Confederation and the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions would be made available if required. The agreement currently in force would in any case be translated and attached to the third periodic report. Similar agreements regarding recruitment measures existed in all State and government agencies and in most municipalities, and contained a certain amount of "positive discrimination", which generally meant that women would be given preference where they were underrepresented, provided that they were equally or almost equally qualified. No systematic evaluation of such agreements had been carried out. A Norwegian research institute, Nordlandsforskning, was at present conducting a more substantial evaluation.

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55. In reply to question 6, she noted that the evaluation of programmes designed to encourage young women to make informed non-traditional career choices showed that some progress had been made in that respect. However, it would appear that women who entered traditionally male occupations left their jobs after a few years. No adequate evaluation of the long-term effects of those programmes had yet been made.

56. Turning to question 7, she said that the programme in question, which had been mentioned in Norway's second periodic report, had run from 1983 to 1986. Four-week courses had been arranged and there had been a positive response from participants in applying for technical jobs; a more substantial evaluation was under way by the Nordlandsforskning Research Institute.

57. Turning to question 8, she noted that a programme for time-limited wage subsidies for employers taking on women and men in non-traditional occupations had not been taken up to any significant extent, partly due to the current situation in the labour market where unemployment was at its highest for many years. However, the programme had had some impact in combination with apprenticeship programmes.

58. The Nordic BRYT project which was the subject of question 9 had, she explained, run from 1986 to 1989. The Norwegian project had focused mainly on education and motivation for informed and non-traditional choices. The resulting increased awareness on the part of both boys and girls as to the choices available was considered more important than actual changes of direction.

59. Referring to question 10, she observed that there had been no such work evaluation in Norway in recent years, although the matter was being taken up in connection with interest being displayed in the equal pay issue.

60. With regard to question 11, women's unpaid domestic work was not included in the GNP. The previous coalition Government had proposed that a sum of Nkr 10,000 in cash should be transferred each year to alleviate care-related responsibilities for families with children up to three years of age at home. The present Government was in favour of using those funds to increase the number of child-care centres. The recent introduction of pension points for unpaid care-related work, referred to in the general discussion, was elaborated upon in Norway's third periodic report in relation to article 11.1 (e).

61. In reply to a question from Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL, Ms. VOLLSET (Norway) said that working hours had not been reduced in recent years. The question had been debated some years previously with a view to establishing a six-hour day but was not currently being pursued.

62. Ms. EVATT asked whether the provisions enabling workers with family responsibilities to take leave if their children fell ill had been extended to cover leave to care for other members of the family for whom a worker might be responsible, including elderly and handicapped persons.

63. Ms. SALOMON (Norway) replied that the Working Environment Act contained a general clause giving employees the right to a shorter working day in such circumstances. If that right was refused, the matter could be taken to court.

64. Ms. AOUIJ, referring to the popularity of part-time employment in Norway, asked whether such employment might not ultimately become women's lot and therefore constitute a form of discrimination. Moreover, as women in some developing countries were increasingly taking over what had traditionally been men's work, she had been disturbed to hear that women were giving up such work in Norway, and wondered what the reasons were.

65. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway) said that in fact more women were taking on full-time jobs in Norway. Research had shown that the choice between full-time and part-time work was more a question of generations: older women who had started to work part time in the 1970s continued to work part time even though they no longer had any child-care responsibilities; younger women had started to work full time and continued to do so after the birth of their children. The reasons why girls were giving up non-traditional work were not known and the matter was a cause for concern in Norway.

Article 12

66. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway), replying to question 1, said that although sexual and physical violence against women was not something new, public opinion had changed considerably over the past 10 to 15 years and awareness of the problem had increased. It was very difficult in any society to assess the exact prevalence of wife-beating, incest or other family violence, owing to the shame attached to such acts. It was not known whether family violence was increasing or declining but there was reason to believe that its full extent had not yet been revealed. Shelters and support centres for incest victims had been established throughout the country in the course of the past 15 years, after the first crisis telephone had been installed in Oslo in 1976. An "Alternative to violence" therapy centre for men had been established in 1987 in Oslo as a trial project. Updated information on those services was included in Norway's third periodic report. A more comprehensive account could be provided on request.

67. In respect of question 2, she referred to Norway's answer under article 6.5.

68. The question of birth control raised under question 3 had been commented on briefly in Norway's first periodic report. The main development in that field was related to the HIV/AIDS problem, in that mass campaigns had been launched to get young people in particular to use condoms.

69. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL drew attention to the recent development of a drug that could be used to interrupt pregnancy without surgery during the first few weeks. It was already being used in France and to some extent in Spain, and could be of great importance to the developing countries. As the Nordic countries' position on such issues was usually very advanced, she wondered whether the drug was also being used in Norway.

70. Ms. SALOMON (Norway) said she was unable to give a precise answer at the present time. However, recent figures had revealed a significant drop in the number of abortions, which were legal in Norway.

Article 14

71. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway), replying to question 1, said that the Nkr 40,000 limit on the income that could be earned by a spouse from a joint enterprise had been abolished by Parliament in 1986. Married couples were now able to make their own

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decisions as to how income should be shared for taxation purposes, and it was assumed that the decision would reflect the amount of work performed by each spouse.

72. As for question 2, it was stated in the second periodic report that questions of social security and pension rights for women engaged in joint farming enterprises had to be approached in conjunction with the distribution of income. The formal rules governing economic and social rights applied equally to men and women.

73. With regard to question 3, she said that the legislation in question was now based on the principle of equal status, but that the rights involved had to be exercised in order to become effective. Existing obstacles were due to different definitions of the concept of work as well as traditional attitudes towards the roles of men and women in agriculture. Measures and schemes to improve the status and work opportunities of women in agriculture were described in Norway's third periodic report.

74. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU, noting that fishing was a widespread but largely male occupation in Norway, asked whether and in what way wives of fishermen were involved in that activity or how they were otherwise occupied. She also wished to know to what extent women participated in regional development planning.

75. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway) said that the traditional practice in the northern parts of the country where fishing was predominant was for the wife to do the farming and the husband the fishing, resulting in what might be termed an equal division of labour. The question of women's involvement in planning was currently being investigated by the Norwegian authorities, and further details would be given in a subsequent report.

76. Ms. EVATT, referring to the comment that the distribution of income from a joint enterprise depended on the contribution or work of each spouse, said that it was unclear whether that included the domestic work done by women or only their direct contribution to the enterprise in question.

77. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway) said that that was left strictly to the discretion of the spouses. The Ministry of Agriculture was currently developing educational programmes to inform the public how joint enterprises functioned in practice.

Article 15

78. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway) explained that, as a result of the Fire Protection Act's amendment in 1987, any citizen could now be required to serve in municipal fire brigades.

79. Ms. EVATT asked whether the same applied to the Seamen's Act, since she understood that women had been excluded from some of its applications.

80. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway) said that she was unable to give an immediate reply, but would take note of the question and refer it to the competent authorities.

Article 16

81. In reply to questions 1 and 2, Ms. VOLLSET (Norway) said that the new Marriage Act would be based essentially on the same principles as the previous legislation; the changes made were simply intended to bring it into line with jurisprudence. For instance, spouses would jointly acquire possession of property such as their dwelling and furniture on the basis of their joint contribution during marriage. Domestic work would carry the same weight as paid work. It would be proposed that an agreement regarding a marriage settlement could be modified if one of the spouses was in an unreasonably disadvantaged position when the marriage was dissolved. Under the existing Act, the "marriage contribution" - payments by one spouse to another following a divorce - was payable for an unlimited period of time. It was now being proposed that, as a rule, such payments should be restricted to a period of three years following divorce, although provision would be made for exemptions in special circumstances, for example after a long period of marriage during which care for many children and domestic work had prevented the spouse from entering paid employment.

82. Ms. EVATT said she would be most interested in obtaining a copy of the draft legislation in question.

83. Ms. ALFONSIN DE FASAN said that it had emerged from a recent conversation she had had with a Norwegian woman that there was a lack of enthusiasm on the part of women about participation in political life, an area dominated by men. She wondered whether consideration was being given to the complementarity of women's and men's roles in politics, based on what appeared to be the more competitive approach of men and the more co-operative approach of women.

84. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway) agreed that there was a lack of enthusiasm, but noted that it was characteristic of both sexes; indeed, the general level of political participation in Norway, especially in local elections, was far lower than in the other Nordic countries. The problem was connected with that of shared values in a society, to which she had referred in her introduction, and was currently under discussion in her country.

85. Ms. SALOMON (Norway) pointed out that there was nevertheless strong evidence of a co-operative spirit in Parliament, where groups of women parliamentarians had taken up important issues.

86. Ms. AKAMATSU commended the Norwegian Government for its constructive approach to achieving full recognition of the rights set forth in the Convention. It emerged from the report that constitutional provisions took precedence over the law, as could be seen from the provision concerning succession to the throne. However, inconsistencies between a constitution and an international convention to which a State was party called for a review of the constitution.

87. Ms. SALOMON (Norway) said that Norway's next report would give details of the amendments made to the regional Constitution in 1988.

88. Ms. CORTI said that, despite the commendable and impressive measures taken by the Government of Norway to achieve equality between the sexes, there was still a long way to go before full equality was realized in some spheres. For instance, the number of women ministers had declined and much remained to be done to achieve full equality in respect of wages.

89. Ms. EVATT commended the progress made from the establishment of de jure equality towards tackling the problem of de facto equality, and from equality in numerical terms to equality in qualitative terms. The report reflected the Government's efforts to give full value to men's and women's identity and work, by broadening the factors used in determining equal pay, enhancing the valuation of domestic work and specific female occupations and enacting legislation, and also by examining the male role, demonstrating how it had changed and could change. It had also looked at the ways in which power was exercised in society, whether on a co-operative or complementary basis, to ensure that women made their full contribution to the exercise of power. She hoped that subsequent reports would reflect the qualitative assessment of men's and women's contribution to society.

90. Ms. AQUIJ said that the political instability of the Norwegian Government referred to by the representative of Norway was bound to affect women in particular. She was also concerned that the principle of equality between men and women was not embodied in the Constitution, and that the Constitution took precedence over all other legislation.

91. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway) said that the Constitution was currently under examination with a view to introducing equal status provisions. As for political instability, she noted that although there were relatively frequent changes of government, Norway compared favourably with other countries in terms of general political stability, and certainly in terms of equality issues.

92. Ms. QESER commended Norway as one of the few countries seriously endeavouring to move from de jure to de facto equality, especially in qualitative terms.

93. She expressed surprise that the report had not been prepared in consultation with women's organizations, which could play a significant role in assessing the real situation in a country. It was also a matter of some surprise that the Committee's work and dialogue with the Government appeared to play no part in encouraging the authorities and women's organizations to promote the publication of the Convention and related information.

94. Ms. SALOMON (Norway) said that although close contacts were maintained with non-governmental organizations, they had not thus far been involved in the preparation of reports to international treaty bodies, partly for reasons of time but also because, although there were strong women's political parties, there could not be said to be an active core of women activists in Norway, since women's issues were now fully integrated into all spheres of life. However, the Committee's comments about the involvement of women's organizations would be conveyed to the Government for inclusion in the next report. The Convention had been published in 1980 and distributed throughout the country, and more active measures were currently being taken to involve women's non-governmental organizations and ministries in public information work.

95. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL commended the use of new indicators in determining the equal status of women in society, the safeguards introduced and the comments on women's political activity. She was, however, concerned by reports of violence against women, for instance in the home, and the continuing existence of prostitution. It would be useful to have more information on those problems and on the measures being taken to tackle them.

96. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU credited Norway with being the vanguard of efforts to ensure equality. She wished to know whether the feminist movement was declining in the country and, if so, whether that was due to the achievement of equality between the sexes. Were women's rights pressure groups encouraged?

97. Ms. VOLLSET (Norway), speaking as a member of the Committee, said she believed that the feminist movement as it had existed in the 1970s was on the decline, and that feminist thought and activities were now directed towards women's involvement in political parties, trade unions and the like, which she hoped the Government would support.

98. Ms. NIKOLAEVA commended the Norwegian Government's approach to the assessment of equality in qualitative terms, as opposed to the purely arithmetical "50-50" approach adopted by some Nordic delegations to the Commission on the Status of Women in the past. She would welcome further comments on that subject in Norway's third report.

99. The CHAIRPERSON, thanking the representatives of Norway on behalf of the Committee, said that a country like Norway, which clearly did a great deal for the advancement of women, served as a model for other countries, which explained the Committee's sometimes detailed and probing questions.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.