



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Forty-first session

Summary record of the 835th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 2 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Šimonović

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

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

Third and fourth periodic reports of Lithuania (continued) (CEDAW/C/LTU/3 and 4; CEDAW/C/LTU/Q/4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Lithuania took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 10 to 14 (continued)

2. **The Chairperson** invited Committee members to resume their questions and comments on article 10.

3. **Ms. Simms** said that, according to the State party's reports, the principle of equality was enshrined in the legal framework and more females than males were enrolled at all levels of the educational system. Yet women were not getting good, well-paying jobs. The conclusion to be drawn was that the type of education they were receiving maintained the patriarchal system. Many of the fields in which male students predominated, such as information technology, engineering, architecture and construction, transport and environmental protection, offered jobs with higher pay and dealt with areas, such as food security and the environment, that were vital to women as well as men. The State party had made a good start in educational equality but should not be satisfied with percentage enrolment; it should look more deeply at what girls were learning. With regard to sex education, the school programmes described in the reports appeared to reinforce traditional gender roles, rather than empowering women to control their own bodies.

4. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** suggested that, in the light of complaints received by the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman about improper portrayals of women in teaching aids, perhaps a more thorough review of textbooks and teaching aids was required. She also agreed that sex education in the broadest sense should be mandatory in the schools.

5. **Mr. Plikšnys** (Lithuania), responding to a question about equal opportunity in sports, said that under the general education plan adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2003, physical education was compulsory for all grades from the first to the twelfth. Lessons were given three times a week.

Physical education teachers were required to draw up an individual programme for each student and to speak with parents about their child's physical condition, preferences and achievements. There was also a non-formal aspect to sports and physical education, ranging from school clubs and other non-curricular activities on the school premises to non-formal education programmes in music, art, sports and other disciplines available to students on an optional basis. There were over 100 sports schools in Lithuania, attended, it was true, by many more boys than girls. A survey conducted had shown that students considered physical education to be among the most important subjects in general education. To address the need for better sports facilities, the new sports strategy for 2006-2012 provided for assistance to municipalities in rehabilitating their sports facilities and creating special facilities for girls.

6. **Ms. Purvaneckienė** (Lithuania), responding to a question about gender studies, said that all the main universities had such programmes. The most advanced were the Šiauliai University Gender Studies Institute and the Vilnius University Gender Studies Centre. The latter offered undergraduate elective courses open to students in all majors as well as courses mainstreamed into social science programmes. Romeris University was preparing to offer a masters programme in gender budgeting.

7. With respect to questions about women in academia, the Government was attempting to address the acknowledged problem of horizontal and vertical segregation at universities and in scientific research. Overcoming vertical segregation appeared to be a matter of time, since there had been a steady increase in the number of women at all levels up to the associate professor level. Appointment as a full professor required a *doctor habilitus* degree, but since currently some 60 per cent of doctoral students were women, they were poised to move into the professorial level.

8. Horizontal segregation related to the concentration of women in certain disciplines. The University of Vilnius Gender Studies Centre had conducted a study on women researchers in science and technology. The Ministry of Education and Science had also commissioned a study on the choice of science and technology subjects by girls in general education and women at university. On the basis of those studies the Ministry had within the past month adopted a strategy to promote equal opportunity for

women in science, which, among other things, had set the goals of having women in 20 per cent of the top administrative posts in science and research and in 30 per cent of posts of researchers in science and technology. Studies had shown that one of the greatest obstacles to women's career advancement was an interruption for child-rearing; the strategy therefore also included measures to assist women to return to their careers after a break for childcare. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour had also launched a project on elimination of horizontal and vertical segregation in two sectors of the labour market: youth and academia.

9. **Ms. Patten** said that she was pleased to see that there had been a significant decline in women's unemployment; however, the delegation had not indicated how many of those employed worked part-time. She would be interested to see an evaluation of the impact of the recommendations on flexible working arrangements; it was possible that such arrangements were partly responsible for the wage differential between women and men. Information on unemployment rates broken down by age and education level would be of value and might reveal whether there was higher unemployment among older, highly educated women. The pronounced occupational segregation was a matter of concern. She would be interested to know what specific steps, perhaps including temporary special measures, were envisaged under the strategy on women in science and technology to increase women's participation in male-dominated fields. The State party should also provide further information about the agreement with social partners in 2003 on an evaluation methodology for types of work and job descriptions, specifically, whether it had been tested and when it was to be implemented. She would like to know whether the avenue of redress in wage differential disputes was to file a complaint with the Office of the Equal Opportunity Ombudsman.

10. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** commended the State party for taking advantage of European Union funds for projects on reconciliation of work and family life, since it was acknowledged that maternity and family responsibilities were the greatest obstacle to career advancement for women. The State report indicated that conditions had improved. Civil society organizations, however, reported that the stereotype in Lithuania that women had sole responsibility for childcare and for the care of the elderly and disabled

remained very strong; that employers reacted negatively to family obligations, for example, asking female job seekers whether they had children; and that childcare services were actually decreasing. Such problems affected not only women but the welfare of everyone in society.

11. **Ms. Juršėnienė** (Lithuania) said that occupational segregation, based on stereotypical attitudes towards women's role in economic activity and family life, remained a serious problem in Lithuania. The Government was addressing the issue in a great variety of ways under the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2005-2009, with programmes funded from both the State budget and European Union structural funds and targeted at changing gender stereotypes among the general public, employers, trade unions and employment agencies. Several projects, for instance, were aimed at inducing employment agencies not to orient women job-seekers primarily to traditionally female-dominated fields.

12. Occupational segregation influenced the gender pay gap. Salaries in female-dominated fields, notably social work, health care and education, were disproportionately low. Among other projects, the Tripartite Council, which brought together Government, trade unions and employers, had developed a methodology for the assessment of jobs and job positions, and those recommendations were being widely disseminated to employers through seminars. The Government could not force employers to adopt the methodology but worked through social dialogue. Despite the existence of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men adopted in 1998, only a handful of complaints about equal pay had been brought before the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman. The law defined the obligations of employers in that regard, but education was needed to make them aware of their obligations.

13. The Government was also working through dialogue with social partners on the reconciliation of work and family life. The law provided that men as well as women could take childcare leave, and the Government was working to change the attitudes not only of employers but also of the trade unions, since very few trade unions had a women's council. The tripartite dialogue on gender issues would succeed only if at least two of the three parties were strong supporters.

14. **Mr. Plikšnys** (Lithuania) said that among the concrete measures to be taken under the strategy for women in science and technology were the development of indicators for monitoring gender equality in programmes in higher institutions, as a prerequisite for research funding eligibility and funding of quotas and stipends for women researchers. European Union structural funds were available for these projects.

15. With regard to the education strategy for rural areas, under a financing yardstick known as the “student basket”, the Government financed rural education at a level two or three times higher per student than in urban areas. Rural schools benefited from the “yellow bus” programme and from the services of social workers, psychologists and special education teachers funded by the Government. Studies had shown that the gap in the rate of completion of secondary education between urban and rural areas had narrowed from about 7 per cent in 2000 to nearly nil in 2007. A study by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) had shown that girls’ achievements were even higher than boys’ except in mathematics.

16. The Programme of Family and Sexual Education approved by the Minister of Education and Science in 2007 was the outcome of several years of consultations among ministry officials, social partners, non-governmental organizations, universities and municipalities. The Programme comprised methodological recommendations, teaching aids and training for teachers. Although the recommendations on how to integrate a sex education programme into the curriculum were not compulsory, programmes were being conducted to disseminate them.

17. With regard to the question on the portrayal of women in textbooks, the complaint brought before the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman represented only one textbook, whereas Ministry experts had evaluated a thousand textbooks in the past year for compliance with criteria of gender tolerance.

18. **Ms. Murauskaitė** (Lithuania) said, with regard to the burden of care for the elderly and disabled, that the national Government made grants to municipalities to help them provide care for the disabled, including those afflicted by dementia. With Government support, municipalities, sometimes through non-governmental organizations, operated day-care centres for severely

disabled children and elderly persons. The number of recipients of such day-care services had increased from about 18,000 in 2003 to about 75,000 in 2007. The programme enabled women caring for disabled children or elderly family members to re-enter the labour market.

19. **Ms. Litvinavičienė** (Lithuania) said that unemployment rates for both genders had dropped to 4.3 per cent in 2007, as compared to 14 per cent for men and 19 per cent for women in 2000. However, 31 per cent of unemployed women had been out of work for over a year. Around 10 per cent of female employees worked part time, as compared to around 7 per cent of male employees. The wage gap between women and men was more pronounced in the public sector, and women working in the hotel and catering industry and the education and agricultural sectors earned the lowest wages.

20. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez**, referring to article 12 of the Convention, said that the reports did not contain sufficient information about the quality of family planning services in the State party or about women’s access to those services. According to a survey conducted by a private organization, 51 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 25 did not use any form of contraception. However, those figures dated from 2003 and, as emphasized by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, it was essential to have updated, detailed information on the situation on the ground. If such data was not currently available, the State party must strive to gather it and include it in its next report.

21. She would be grateful to hear the delegation’s views on the links between the low rate of contraceptive use in Lithuania and the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections, in particular HIV/AIDS. Lastly, on the issue of abortion, the fourth periodic report revealed that there had been a sharp decline in the number of therapeutic abortions performed between 1997 and 2006. However, she had learned from other sources that a draft act designed to limit the situations in which abortion was permitted was currently pending before Parliament. She requested an update on the status of that initiative and also enquired whether the national machinery for the advancement of women and/or non-governmental organizations had been involved in any consultations concerning the draft act. She was particularly

concerned that the draft act in question appeared to be in direct conflict with resolution 1607 (2008) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which called on all member States to guarantee women's access to safe and legal abortions.

22. **Ms. Hayashi** said that the State party's responses to the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/LTU/Q/4/Add.1) did not address the question of contraceptive use in a substantive manner. There was no analysis of the possible causes of the low contraceptive use rate and no clear description of the awareness-raising measures adopted. She wished to know whether all women in Lithuania had access to modern, affordable methods of contraception, including emergency contraceptives.

23. The draft act on the protection of life in the prenatal phase gave significant cause for concern, since it would strictly limit the situations in which abortions could be performed. Although more than 110 members of the European Parliament had already sent a letter urging the Lithuanian Parliament not to adopt the draft act, it was still pending. It would be interesting to hear the Government's views on that situation. Since women could not easily procure contraceptives, she feared that restricting the availability of abortion would have disastrous consequences. Furthermore, adoption of the draft act would amount to a violation of the sexual and reproductive rights protected by the Convention.

24. **Ms. Pimentel** drew attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 24 and stressed that access to appropriate services was essential to ensure the protection of women's sexual and reproductive health and to prevent unsafe abortions. Under the draft act on the protection of life in the prenatal phase, abortion would be permitted only in cases where continuing with the pregnancy would pose a risk to the health or the life of the mother or where the pregnancy was a result of a criminal act. She was curious to know, however, why the proposed legislation did not extend to cases of foetal impairment and enquired whether it would be possible to incorporate provisions covering that eventuality into the draft.

25. She was concerned about the concept of family set out in the national family policy framework, which appeared to encompass only married, heterosexual couples and served to reinforce the traditional stereotype of women as childbearers. That policy also

conceived of the foetus as a separate entity from the mother, thereby creating an obstacle to abortion, and failed to articulate the importance of comprehensive sex education.

26. **Ms. Dairiam** said that she would be grateful for more information on the measures taken to ensure the provision of appropriate reproductive health-care services for adolescents. The State party should provide statistical information on teenage pregnancy and abortion rates and indicate how those phenomena affected girls' education.

27. She wondered whether the Government was managing to strike the right balance between preventive and curative health-care services. In that connection, she drew attention to general recommendation No. 24 and stressed that the obligation to promote and protect women's right to health entailed more than the provision of sexual and reproductive health care.

28. On the issue of employment, the representative of the State party had indicated that the Government was powerless to address occupational segregation and the wage gap in the private sector. However, pursuant to article 2, subparagraph (e), of the Convention, States parties had an obligation to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise. She would be grateful for further clarification of the Government's position on that issue. Lastly, while she welcomed the fact that rural women had access to the services provided by the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, it would be useful to know how many of them had actually submitted complaints by telephone or e-mail.

29. **Ms. Juršėnienė** (Lithuania) said that, although the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman collected statistics on the number of complaints filed, that data was disaggregated by county rather than by urban/rural area. Efforts would be made to rectify that situation. The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men prohibited discrimination against women in the workplace. In addition, gender equality planning provisions for the private sector had been incorporated into new draft legislation that had already been approved by the Tripartite Council and referred to Parliament for adoption.

30. **Ms. Armonavičienė** (Lithuania) acknowledged that the draft act on the protection of life in the prenatal phase was very controversial and had been the

subject of debate at all levels. The Ministry of Health had been asked to submit its comments on the draft to Parliament and, in that context, had expressed its opposition to the proposal. Given the significant influence of the Church in Lithuanian society, however, it was difficult to predict the ultimate outcome of the legislative process.

31. Statistics revealed that the abortion rate was declining. Family doctors and midwives were primarily responsible for providing sexual and reproductive health care and, since the network of primary health-care facilities was fairly well developed, all citizens, regardless of their age or gender, were able to access family planning services. The low contraceptive use rate was indeed problematic and the issue was a controversial one. Some women preferred to resort to natural contraceptive methods on account of their personal beliefs. Moreover, hormonal contraceptives, including emergency contraceptives, were available only by prescription from a gynaecologist.

32. **Ms. Juršėnienė** (Lithuania) said that the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2005-2009) contained a series of recommendations relating to reproductive health and contraceptive use. Those recommendations included various awareness-raising measures funded from the State budget and geared in particular towards women in rural areas. The Ministry of Health had also launched awareness-raising and educational campaigns in the mass media and disseminated information on the availability of cervical cancer screening.

33. **Ms. Armonavičienė** (Lithuania) said that the teenage pregnancy rate had remained constant in recent years owing to an increase in the number of awareness-raising campaigns. Furthermore, the new family health programme provided for the implementation of a range of youth-friendly reproductive health-care services, including counselling. Infection rates for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases remained relatively low, despite the low contraceptive use rate. HIV/AIDS infection rates were three times lower among women than men.

34. **Ms. Tan**, referring to the seminars for rural women organized by the Lithuanian Women Farmers' Association mentioned in paragraph 189 of the fourth periodic report (CEDAW/C/LTH/4), enquired as to the impact of those seminars on the participants' standard of living. It would be particularly interesting to know

how many rural women had started their own businesses and whether their incomes had increased as a result. Specific examples of success stories would be welcome. The State party should also indicate whether the Ministry of Agriculture had used the lessons learned from the seminars to implement any concrete strategies. Was technical assistance or funding available to rural women entrepreneurs and had any contingency plans been devised to ensure the sustainability of such programmes in the event that European Union funds were exhausted? Lastly, she wished to know how many older rural women had benefited from the aforementioned measures.

35. **Ms. Begum** expressed concern about the reported gaps in the water supply to rural areas and enquired as to the steps taken to rectify that problem. It would be interesting to know whether the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was being implemented in an effective manner in rural areas and whether an analysis of its impact in those areas had been conducted.

36. The State party should indicate the percentage of female local government employees in rural areas, as well as the percentage of women elected to decision-making positions in those areas. It would also be useful to know whether the female unemployment rate had declined in rural areas and whether rural women wishing to start up microenterprises had access to financial incentives, such as tax breaks or interest-free loans. Lastly, she enquired as to the availability of affordable transport and health-care facilities in rural areas, particularly those that catered to the needs of older, disabled and Roma women.

37. **Ms. Juršėnienė** (Lithuania) said that the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men set out a number of measures designed to facilitate the participation of rural women in decision-making and the labour market. In addition, the third and fourth periodic reports described various steps taken by the Lithuanian Development Agency for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises to promote women's employment in both traditional and non-traditional professions. As for success stories, she pointed out that the programme document on fisheries had been the first such document to set a quota for women's participation in decision-making bodies in a non-traditional sector.

38. **Ms. Litvinavičienė** (Lithuania) said that in 2007, 31 per cent of entrepreneurs in Lithuania had been women, compared with 28 per cent in 2006. Women tended to start up their own business between the ages of 30 and 50, while men tended to become entrepreneurs at a younger age. Most Lithuanians started up their businesses with their own savings; only a small percentage took out bank loans.

Articles 15 and 16

39. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked whether mediation was used or encouraged in the case of the breakdown of a relationship or marriage and if so, whether there were safety measures to protect vulnerable parties during mediation procedures. She was also concerned that the Government had not sufficiently addressed domestic violence. The statement made in the third periodic report that some aspects of family relations were of an exceptionally private nature (para. 366) should be reconsidered. Additional information should be provided on the protection of women's property and their maintenance and custody rights in partnerships other than traditional marriages, on the economic welfare of women with children following divorce and on the situation of single mothers. It would be interesting to learn whether the Government commissioned research with a view to reforming laws and regulations on marriage and other partnerships. Given that under Lithuanian law, the spouse responsible for the dissolution of the marriage had no right to maintenance, it would be useful to know the grounds for deciding which spouse was responsible.

40. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** asked under which circumstances the courts might consider reducing the age of consent to marriage. The fact that the spouse responsible for the dissolution of a marriage had no right to maintenance might force women victims of domestic violence to remain trapped in a marriage, and consideration should therefore be given to amending that provision.

41. **Ms. Tan** requested additional data on the divorce rate during the previous five years, for both rural and urban areas. It would be interesting to know whether there were specialized family courts and whether free legal advice was available to women seeking a divorce. She wondered whether there were sanctions for fathers who did not make maintenance or child support payments and whether the Government provided support to single mothers.

42. **Ms. Mikalauskaitė** (Lithuania) said that the Government did not provide mediation for family disputes; there were no specialized courts for family matters but judges did specialize in those cases. With respect to child protection and support, children were provided with legal protection by the State irrespective of the marital status of their parents. Since 2001, there were legal provisions that allowed couples seeking a divorce to reach a common agreement with respect to child custody and maintenance payments. If fathers did not pay child support, mothers could apply to the court for financial support until the child reached the age of 18. Depending on income, free legal consultation was available in divorce proceedings and single parents were also entitled to certain benefits.

43. **Ms. Juršėnienė** (Lithuania) said that there were three crisis centres that provided mediation in cases of domestic violence. While the number of children born out of wedlock had increased, the number of divorces in Lithuania remained stable: in 2000, there had been 3.1 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants and in 2006, there had been 3.3 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants.

44. **The Chairperson** invited members to ask follow-up questions on the articles discussed.

45. **Ms. Pimentel** said that she wondered whether there was a link between the assertion that women in Lithuania preferred natural methods of contraception and the fact that contraceptives required a doctor's prescription. She wondered whether it might be possible to remove that requirement, given that it might be difficult for poor women to obtain a prescription.

46. **Ms. Armonavičienė** (Lithuania) said that only hormonal contraceptives required a prescription; other forms of contraception could be purchased over the counter.

47. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** said that clarification should be provided of the circumstances under which a court could reduce the age of consent to marriage.

48. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that the main reason for lowering the age of consent to marriage was pregnancy.

49. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** asked whether there was a mandatory sexual education programme in schools and requested more information on the draft bill on abortion that had been presented to Parliament.

50. **Mr. Plikšnys** (Lithuania) said that sexual education was not taught as a separate subject but was integrated into other subjects from first to twelfth grade.

51. **Ms. Murauskaitė** (Lithuania) said that some members of Parliament had presented a draft bill aimed at prohibiting abortions but the Government was strongly committed to allowing abortions.

52. **Ms. Shin** said that the delegation had not provided a satisfactory response as to why battery and minor health impairments were grouped together as one category in Table 2 of the Annex to the fourth periodic report. In addition, clarification should be provided of the reason why women victims of domestic violence were prepared to continue to live with their spouses. It was important that the Government should send out a strong signal that domestic violence was not tolerated.

53. **Ms. Sirgedienė** (Lithuania) said that the Government had established special courses for perpetrators of domestic violence and non-governmental organizations offered support and counselling to women victims, who made their own decision whether to proceed with a police investigation.

54. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that domestic violence was not covered by one particular article of the Criminal Code: if the act of domestic violence was relatively minor, the provisions of one article would apply but if the violence was more serious, other articles would apply. With respect to the question concerning mediation services and domestic violence, in private prosecution cases a reconciliation hearing was held at court so that the victim and perpetrator could attempt reconciliation before or instead of a court hearing.

55. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that additional information should be provided on how women victims of violence could apply for a protection order.

56. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that protection orders could be issued under both the Civil Code and the Criminal Code; in both cases, the aim was to protect the person cited in the order.

57. **Ms. Simms** asked whether emergency contraceptives required a prescription and whether

police officers were trained to deal with cases of domestic violence.

58. **Ms. Armonavičienė** (Lithuania) said that emergency contraceptives required a prescription.

59. **Ms. Sirgedienė** (Lithuania) said that police officers were provided with special training at the police training colleges.

60. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that clarification should be provided of the circumstances in which a spouse was considered responsible for the break-up of a marriage. In the case of divorce, it would be interesting to know whether women were only entitled to assets accumulated during the marriage or whether they could claim a stake of future benefits.

61. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that the Civil Code provided a concept of marital obligations, which was used to determine responsibility in divorces. In the case of divorce, women could only claim a share of assets accumulated during the marriage.

62. **Ms. Murauskaitė** (Lithuania) said that Lithuania had made significant progress in implementing the Convention and remained fully committed to improving the status of women. The Government would take into account the Committee's concluding comments with a view to implementing further measures aimed at promoting equality in Lithuanian society.

63. **The Chairperson** said that the Committee recognized that progress had been made in Lithuania and it was commendable that the optional protocol had been ratified. However, some challenges faced the Government, including the successful incorporation of the Convention and the optional protocol into domestic legislation with a view to giving them greater visibility and making them a tool for upholding standards on women's rights. Finally, the Committee hoped that the Government would make use of the general recommendations on violence against women and temporary special measures.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.