



**Convention on the Elimination
of all Forms of Discrimination
Against Women**

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/SR.66
14 March 1986
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 66th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 11 March 1986, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BERNARD

CONTENTS

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

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

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

Initial report of Denmark (CEDAW/C/5/Add.22)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mrs. Andersen (Denmark) took a place at the Committee table.
2. Mrs. ANDERSEN (Denmark), submitting the initial report of her country, said that she would deal primarily with evolutions in the situation concerning equality between men and women since 1984 when the report had been prepared.
3. While official steps to promote equality had begun in 1975, the International Women's Year, with the establishment of the Equal Status Council, organizations for women had long been influential in Denmark; currently, women held 26.3 per cent of the seats in Parliament. In April 1985, Parliament had passed a bill on equal representation of men and women in public councils and committees and that Act seemed already to be having a positive effect.
4. The proportion of women in the overall labour force had risen from 49.1 per cent in 1967 to 64.2 per cent in 1984; however, unemployment among women had also increased and was currently higher than among men. The Government was concerned at that situation and, together with the Council and the social partners, had recently organized several campaigns in order to improve women's opportunities in the labour market. As the report pointed out, 14 equal opportunities consultants had been engaged in 1981 to follow the experiments and to make criticisms, as appropriate. There was still a difference between the average salary of men and that of women owing not only to the current structure of the labour market but also to the fact that women generally did not work for as many years as men, had fewer qualifications and worked on a part-time basis.
5. The new Maternity Leave Act, of 21 February 1984, which inter alia provided for parent's leave of two weeks for the father, was widely used. However, regulations concerning unemployment allowance, annual leave and employment conditions of pregnant women and nursing mothers would have to be closely monitored. It was probably no coincidence that the birth rate had fallen by 40 per cent between 1966 and 1983; although, in the last year, it had increased again by 9 or 10 per cent. The number of marriages had also dropped by 50 per cent between 1965 and 1982 while the number of divorces had more than doubled during the same period. At the same time there had been a significant increase in the number of consensual unions.
6. Some three years earlier, a committee on assistance to rape victims had been established. In addition, in view of the problem of family violence, more and more shelters for battered women and children were being set up.

(Mrs. Andersen, Denmark)

7. Following the Nairobi Conference, Parliament had asked the Government to draw up, by 1 January 1987, a national plan of action concerning equality of women and men, listing the economic means to be used for the projects to be undertaken. The Nairobi document dealt with a number of problems which directly concerned Denmark, for although there was equality between the two sexes in many areas, on paper, much remained to be done in order to make that equality real. In 1985, the Ministry of Education had drawn up a plan of action dealing with all areas of education. In accordance with the Nairobi recommendations, additional funds had recently been allocated for research on women.

8. The Parliament of Greenland had also established a Committee for Equality in which the various social partners and women's organizations participated. Its tasks would be essentially the same as those of the Equal Status Council.

9. With regard to pension rights, everyone over 67 years of age was entitled to an old age pension. In connection with the review of the Early Retirement Pensions Act, regulations concerning widows' pensions had been cancelled and new provisions had been adopted which would enable persons aged between 50 and 67 to get an early retirement pension. It was expected that more women than men would benefit from the new regulations. The system of taxation was currently being reformed but it was feared that the suggestions of the Spouse Taxation Committee, which had completed its work in 1985, would not be taken into consideration.

10. Ms. EVATT congratulated Denmark on its efforts to promote equality between men and women as demonstrated, in particular, by the creation of the Equal Status Council, a very high-level body which had important responsibilities. She would none the less like to comment on some specific points. The first part of the report, which outlined Danish legislation, should have contained statistical data. She had nothing but praise for the attention given to discriminatory advertising and to the role of the media which, together with advertising, could contribute greatly to changing sex role stereotypes. The introduction of consultants, referred to in connection with article 5, was extremely interesting as were the programmes designed to reduce inequalities in respect of employment, but she would have liked to know the percentage of boys and girls receiving various types of training and in the vocational schools. With regard to article 6, the report did not state clearly whether prostitution was considered an offence and whether persons involved in prostitution were liable to prosecution.

11. With respect to article 7 and to the efforts being made to increase the participation of women in political life, she would have welcomed detailed figures regarding the representation of women in the various national bodies. With respect to article 8, the report did not indicate how many Danish women there were in international organizations. With respect to article 9, it appeared that children automatically acquired the nationality of the mother, but she would welcome details regarding the rights of the father; in particular, whether recognition of paternity automatically gave the father rights regarding custody.

(Ms. Evatt)

12. With regard to article 10 she noted with interest the existence of the Committee on Sex Roles and Education, which was in the forefront of the efforts made in that field, but she again regretted the fact that the report did not indicate the proportion of girls and boys enrolled in the various types of education.

13. With regard to employment, the figures quoted by Mrs. Andersen showed that the situation of women was improving steadily even though there was still a gap between the salary levels of men and that of women. In connection with article 11, she would like to have some details regarding the type of situation in which exceptions to the regulations relating to equality were permissible.

14. She had found the information on child health and welfare very interesting for that was a key aspect of women's lives and of their access to independence and equality. Accordingly, she would have liked to know how many places were available in child-care facilities and how the latter were funded. She would also have welcomed some statistics on infant mortality.

15. Turning to article 13, there was no information about women's access to loans and credit opportunities, yet that was a very important problem, especially for single and divorced women. The report also gave no information about the status of rural women.

16. Since the divorce rate in Denmark was very high, it would have been interesting to have some details about legislation governing the apportionment of property and in particular, to know, whether such legislation recognized men and women, and also children, as having different needs, and whether equivalent legislation existed for unmarried couples. Finally, it was reassuring to know that there were shelters for women and children who were the victims of domestic violence. That problem, which unfortunately afflicted all countries, showed that a change of attitude and mentality was urgently needed.

17. Ms. WADSTEIN expressed appreciation that Ms. Andersen had provided further statistics in her presentation, and observed that the report submitted by the Danish Government was very detailed. She wished to know however, whether the new act on equal representation of men and women on councils, committees and other public bodies was intended to modify the governmental recommendations quoted in the report, and would also welcome more details about the results achieved thus far in that connection.

18. Turning to article 5, she noted with interest the leave granted to fathers to look after their children, but would like to know in what circumstances such leave was granted and to what extent fathers availed themselves of it. That was a novel approach to changing attitudes and doing away with stereotypes. Accordingly, she would like to know whether mentalities had really changed, how men were reacting to the new provisions and whether they were involved in drafting them. She would also like to know more about the sharing of housework between men and women and, for instance, to have some statistics on the time spent on housework by men and women respectively.

(Ms. Wadstein)

19. The number of measures taken to promote equality of opportunity in the areas of employment and education was truly impressive. None the less, the emphasis appeared to be more on equal treatment than on affirmative action. She wished to know whether exceptions to the Equal Opportunities Act were frequent, which employers requested them and in what circumstances. For instance, were such exceptions the result of directives issued by the European Communities? Since the relevant legislation had been in force for seven years, it might have been useful to mention its drawbacks or, conversely, its positive effects so that they might serve as examples.
20. Ms. JAYASINGHE, noting that education helped to enhance the status of women the world over, asked whether, in Denmark, the literacy rate for men was different from that for women. She requested more detailed information on the action taken by the Equal Status Council to reduce the gap between the educational levels of men and women and the methods used in schools to eliminate stereotyped images of men's and women's roles.
21. Ms. SMITH said that, while she welcomed the additional information provided by the representative of Denmark, she felt that the statistics given were inadequate. Although equal pay was guaranteed by law, the Danish representative had herself acknowledged that there was a gap between the law and actual practice in that area. She wished to know what steps the Danish Government planned to take to enhance the status of women in that connection and whether employees' demands had been brought before the courts. The fact that the Act specified that employees could not waive their right to equal pay was very important, since many women allowed themselves to be influenced to do so. Concerning equality in the area of consumption, she would like to have some examples of the activities carried out by the Consumer Council.
22. In her own country, Norway, many young women still opted for the traditional female occupations. She wondered whether the same held true in Denmark and whether new ways had been found of encouraging girls to choose other openings.
23. Ms. VELIZ de VILLALVILLA said that she too regretted the absence of statistics. She wished to know whether many women worked part-time and what place the legislation in force accorded to such employment. The booklet that had been distributed to the Committee stated that the percentage of working women in Denmark was very high, but it did not indicate whether that percentage included women employed part-time.
24. She noted that 63 per cent of the female population aged from 17 to 19 years were enrolled in education. Those figures should be compared with the figures for the male population. In order to demonstrate the evolution of the role of women in Danish society, statistics might be provided on different careers with a breakdown by sex, and an indication given of the percentage of women university graduates who were actually exercising the profession in which they had been trained. Finally, it would be useful to know whether women were given instruction to enable them to take advantage of the legislation in force.

(Ms. Veliz de Villalvilla)

25. While recognition of the right to paternity leave represented definite progress, she wondered how many men actually availed themselves of that right.

26. Ms. PEYTCHEVA commended the representative of Denmark on the initial report submitted by her country, which gave a fairly comprehensive idea of the legal status of Danish women. Unfortunately, in the absence of adequate statistics, the Committee could not judge to what extent equality under the law translated into equality in practice. It was of course true that the report had been drawn up before the Committee prepared its general guidelines on the form and content of reports.

27. According to the report, there were marked discrepancies in the educational levels of men and women. Since young women's choice of vocational training was restricted, they had fewer employment opportunities, a situation which limited the application of a number of provisions of article 11 of the Convention. In that connection, it would be interesting to know what percentage of doctors, engineers and judges, and also unemployed persons, were women. It might also be indicated up to what level education was compulsory and to what extent it was free of charge.

28. The report provided extremely interesting information on the structure and functions of the Equal Status Council and other governmental bodies responsible for enhancing the status of women. Further information was needed, however, on the results of the activities of equality consultants (information campaigns and programmes) and on how experiments in the areas of education, training and professional activity would be applied in practice.

29. She would like to know what percentage of the female labour force was employed part-time and to what social benefits such employment entitled them. In view of the provisions of the Danish Social Assistance Act and of article 11 (2) (c) of the Convention, she wondered whether there were sufficient places in child-care facilities for all the children aged 1 to 6 years whom their parents wished to register in such centres.

30. Ms. MONTENEGRO de FLETCHER said she would like more detailed information on the rules applicable to the property of people living in consensual relationships, and on divorce law. She also wondered whether questions could be brought to the Equal Status Council and whether it had the power to render enforceable decisions. She would like to know whether battered women had any means of recourse and whether sanctions could be imposed on culprits.

31. Statistical data should be provided on the make-up of women in the country's public and political life and an indication given as to whether women's participation in social organizations and associations, political parties and trade unions was encouraged, and whether women's organizations, governmental or otherwise, received support.

32. She wondered whether the very low birth rate was the result of a national policy or of individual choice by Danish women. She would like to know whether length of service was taken into account in calculating the compensation which an

(Ms. Montenegro de Fletcher)

employer must pay to an employee dismissed on account of pregnancy, and whether child-care facilities were private or public.

33. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU said that the progress made by Denmark and the other Scandinavian countries in promoting equal rights for women could serve as an example to many countries. Inequalities still persisted, however. For instance, 11 per cent of women were unemployed as compared with 6 per cent of men, and there were still considerable pay inequalities.

34. According to the report, the Danish Government was considering several solutions, including the quota system, to encourage the representation of women in political life. In that regard, it would be interesting to know what proportion of women occupied positions of responsibility, sat on committees or important councils and were on the bench.

35. It was regrettable that there was no body empowered to act against discriminatory advertising which promoted the "traditional" image of the female sex.

36. Maternity leave provisions were extremely generous but it seemed unfair that the period of absence, which was taken into account for calculating length of service, was not considered for pension purposes: it must not be forgotten that child-bearing was a social function. It would be interesting to know how the system of paternity leave functioned in practice and how many fathers had actually requested and obtained such leave.

37. She noted with satisfaction that, in the spirit of article 5 of the Convention, equality consultants had been assigned to employment agencies. She would like to know whether their activities had succeeded in altering the traditional distribution of occupations between men and women and what measures were contemplated to change girls' behaviour in that regard.

38. Ms. CARON congratulated the Danish Government on the frankness of its report. All countries should indicate the obstacles they were encountering in implementing laws in favour of women, something which would make it easier to follow the progress made from one report to the next. In connection with the new Maternity Leave Act, she would like to know what proportion of men availed themselves of the right to parental leave. It was also very interesting that spouses could not retain their own surnames on marriage and choose whether the child would bear the father's or the mother's name.

39. Since the report indicated that certain combat or combat-support units of the armed forces had been open to women since 1984, she would be interested to know what was the proportion of women in those units. She would also like to know how many women sat on the bench in higher courts and how many occupied positions of responsibility in higher education establishments. She also wondered whether the work done by housewives received any official recognition. Finally, since the report emphasized family planning but gave no information about abortion, she would like to know whether women were completely free to choose to have an abortion.

40. Ms. GUAN Mingian noted the encouraging results achieved since the establishment of the Equal Status Council in 1975. Some points seemed to require further clarification, however. For instance, she would like to know whether the Danish Penal Code contained provisions punishing acts of violence against women, such as rape and other ill treatment. She noted with interest that domestic science was an obligatory subject for both boys and girls in primary and secondary schools and wondered whether, in practice, that led to an equal sharing of housework between men and women.

41. She pointed to what appeared to be a contradiction in the report with regard to education: on the one hand, the report stated that more girls than boys completed their studies. Later on, however, it indicated that the drop-out rate was higher for women. That point required some clarification. The report also made no mention of the problems facing young women in the area of education, or of the measures taken by the Government in that regard. Finally, the report stated that men and women had the right to be sterilized from the age of 25 years onwards, but did not specify whether or not women were free to have an abortion.

42. Ms. OESER said that the information provided by the Danish Government on the various means employed to promote women's participation in political and public life, in particular the quota system was interesting. Generally speaking, the report made it possible to form an idea of the results achieved and the sectors that still created problems, but some grey areas remained. For instance, the Marketing of Goods Act did not seem to provide any powers to take measures against discriminatory advertising, which reduced women to the role of sex objects. It was therefore unclear what the Government's real intentions were in that regard and what it intended to do to give substance to the Act.

43. The report stated that, in the event of dismissal of an employee on account of pregnancy, the employee was entitled to compensation. She would like to know whether such dismissals were frequent and, more generally, how many women were unemployed. Noting also that violations of the Equal Opportunities Act could be referred to a court, she wished to know how many legal actions had in fact been brought. The report emphasized the existence of day-care centres and child-care facilities, but it would be interesting to know whether families had to bear part of the costs of such facilities and, if so, what proportion of the family budget such expenses represented. From the information provided, it also appeared that women enjoyed less latitude than men in choosing a profession. What efforts were being made to remedy that situation? Finally, she would like to know whether Denmark had entered any reservations to the Convention.

44. Ms. MACEDO de SHEPPARD said that she would appreciate clarification of two specific points. First, the report indicated that the Ministry of the Interior provided financing for activities relating to sex education. She would like to know what powers the Ministry of the Interior enjoyed in that regard and what arrangements had been made. Secondly, she wished to know why an exception to the equality of opportunity rule had been granted to a major Danish commercial firm with subsidiaries in other countries.

45. Ms. EL-FETOUH asked whether ratification of the Convention had enhanced the awareness of Danish women and enabled them to progress towards equality. It would have been useful, in that connection, to indicate what the situation had been prior to ratification of the Convention and what legal undertakings had been made by the Danish Government. With regard to the Equal Status Council, the report did not specify whether the Council's recommendations were of a purely optional nature.

46. It would also be useful to know whether the Government heeded public opinion with regard to discriminatory advertising, particularly within the context of the Marketing of Goods Act. It was a fact, frankly recognized by the report, that the media had not kept up with the evolution of the status of women over the past 20 years. It was therefore important to know what efforts were being made currently by the mass communications media and by the Equal Status Council to help women become aware of their rights.

47. In the area of education, it would be interesting to know whether there were specific programmes aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination and whether parents and teachers were working together in that connection. It would also be useful to have more details on the participation of women in decision-making and on their role in political organizations and government institutions.

48. The report gave no information about the legal position of married women. It would be useful to know whether they were able to manage their own property and what their financial situation was before and after marriage. Neither was any information given about the minimum age for marriage in Denmark. She wondered whether the marriage age in that country was governed by criteria of a psychological or a biological nature, as was the case in some countries. She would like to know whether Denmark, like the other Scandinavian countries, was also faced with the problem of violence against women and whether, as in other countries with a very high standard of living, women were gradually abandoning certain professional activities in order to return to family responsibilities.

49. Ms. SALEMA pointed out that the Danish Constitution of 1953 contained no explicit provision guaranteeing equality between men and women, and wondered whether consideration should be given to the need to include in the Constitution some of the principles set forth in the Convention, if necessary in the form of amendments. Although the first part of the report defined the legal framework within which the Convention was being applied and recalled the general principles of Danish law on the subject, it would be useful to know how the system operated in practice and how Danish courts or administrative bodies implemented the provisions of the Convention. One could not over-emphasize the fact that the achievement of equality for women depended above all on political will, which must be written into the Constitution if it was to endure.

50. With regard to practical matters, it would be useful to have a precise idea of women's participation in political and governmental bodies and to know what mechanisms had been envisaged by the Danish State for the evaluation of such participation. It would, for example, be interesting to know how many women sat on the bench and whether the Equal Status Council consisted exclusively of women.

51. Ms. CORTES asked when the 5 per cent quota had been introduced for girls in the technical schools of certain industrial sectors, and what were the initial results of that measure; what was the situation since women had been admitted to maritime training schools; and whether current figures reflected an optimum birth rate and, if not, how the authorities were trying to improve the situation.

52. Ms. IDER requested details on the distribution of the labour force by sex, age and industrial sector and asked whether a pattern of professional activity emerged therefrom. She also requested information on the proportion of women in elected bodies and the civil service and their level of participation in political life; the percentage of women who had received primary, secondary and higher education, or undergone specialized training and in what field; whether the Government was taking measures designed specifically to improve the level of women's training; and whether education was free of charge at all levels.

53. With regard to the tax system, it would be useful to know whether the incomes of a couple were combined for the purpose of calculating taxes, something which would encourage married women to stay at home rather than work. In that context, she would like to know whether the increasing trend towards consensual relationships was also due to the tax system, whether cohabitation posed a problem, what effect it had on children and the couple, and whether studies had been carried out on that subject.

54. She also wished to know who funded child-care facilities, maternity leave and the health system. Since there were several women's organizations, she would like to know how many members they had, what their objectives were and whether the Government was helping them in their struggle for peace and disarmament.

55. It would also be useful to know whether the provisions of the Equal Opportunities Act and the Equal Pay Act were applied as strictly in the private sector as in the public sector, how many cases were brought before the labour tribunals each year and in what proportion their settlements were favourable to women. In conclusion, she wished to know whether the exploitation of pornography was a problem and what the Government was doing in that connection.

56. Mrs. Andersen (Denmark) withdrew.

Initial report of Mongolia (CEDAW/C/5/Add.20)

57. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia) took a place at the Committee table.

58. Mr. ENKHSAIKHAN (Mongolia), introducing the initial report of his country, said that at the beginning of the century Mongolia had been one of the most backward countries in Asia, with enormous social inequalities, and inequalities between the sexes, and that the people's revolution of 1921 had opened the way for economic and social development, turned Mongolia into an agrarian-industrial State, granted political, economic and civil rights to women and introduced equality between the sexes.

(Mr. Enkhsaikhan, Mongolia)

59. Average life expectancy had reached 67 years, and the country had 24 doctors and 114 hospital beds for every 10,000 inhabitants. Illiteracy had gradually been eliminated, and every fourth person in the country was attending an educational establishment.

60. The Mongolian Constitution recognized most of the rights embodied in the Convention and the Government strictly observed equality in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. Women thus enjoyed genuine equality. The situation described in the report, which had been prepared in 1983, still applied, since no new laws specifically pertaining to women had been adopted since that time.

61. The Mongolian Women's Organization was active on both the national and international fronts. It had taken part in the Nairobi Conference and was co-operating in preparations for observance of the International Year of Peace.

62. Mongolia faced two major objective difficulties in its economic and social development: the shortage of manpower, in a country with a population of 1,866,360 inhabitants, of whom 47.1 per cent were under 16 years of age, and the harshness of the climate, which adversely affected construction and agricultural activities. In conclusion, he wished to read out a list of corrections that should be made to the English translation of the report, and reserved the right to comment on the English translation of the annex or to provide the Secretariat with a text that would render more faithfully the content of certain provisions.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.