



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

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN  
Fifteenth session  
15 January-2 February 1996

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Hanna Beate SCHÖPP-SCHILLING (Germany)

Addendum

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

B. Consideration of reports

1. Initial reports

Iceland

1. The Committee considered the combined initial and second periodic reports of Iceland (CEDAW/C/ICE/1-2) at its 290th and 291st meetings, on 18 and 24 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.290 and 291).

2. In introducing the report, the representative of Iceland informed the Committee that the original first report of 1987 had by mistake never been submitted and that the current initial and second report covered the period up to 31 December 1991. He proceeded to inform the Committee about legal changes and recent developments in the field of women's human rights that had occurred in his country since the submission of the report.

3. The representative pointed to various measures in education, including equal rights education in schools and legally mandated vocational training for

women. In order to eliminate discrimination, which still existed, an Equal Status Council and a Complaint Committee had been established. In 1994, a human rights section had been included in the Icelandic Constitution, including a reference to sex. A four-year plan on measures to obtain equal status between the sexes focused on action to promote equal status in the school system, in the labour market, in rural districts and with regard to social rights. The representative described measures taken to eliminate violence against women, including a shelter for victims, payment of damages to the victims of violence and the mobilization of men against violence.

4. The representative illustrated the important participation of women in public life, which had increased steadily since 1979. The President of the country had been a woman since 1980 and was also one of the first democratically elected women leaders in the world. In the last parliamentary elections, women won 25 per cent of all the seats in Parliament. A women's party existed; women's political representation at municipal level now reached about 30 per cent and in public commissions around 20 per cent.

5. The representative pointed out that discrimination was persistent in the field of employment. Women's participation in the formal economy was very high, but some gender differences existed in wages. The labour market was segregated to some extent. Unemployment affected women more than men. In order to change the wage system and achieve greater balance in family responsibilities, the Government was taking specific measures, including a revision of the act on maternity leave, which should enable men to better assume their caring roles. Municipal governments planned to expand childcare facilities. Women represented over 50 per cent of university graduates and this was reflected in the public sector in particular. Job evaluation was seen as an important factor for ensuring pay equity.

#### Concluding comments of the Committee

6. In concluding, the representative stated that the national report prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women, the debate on women's rights and the present report had helped his country to assess what had been achieved and what steps should be taken in the future.

#### Introduction

7. The Committee found the initial and second periodic reports of Iceland to be frank and welcomed the extensive oral introduction of the report, which supplemented in very large measure what should have been included in the report. It should have been submitted earlier in 1995 as an amendment. The Committee also welcomed the answers to questions posed during consideration of the report.

#### Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

8. The Committee was of the opinion that the fact that the Convention and other international treaties had not been incorporated into the domestic laws and so could not be enforced in the country adversely affected full implementation of the Convention.

Positive aspects

9. The Committee welcomed the inclusion in the Constitution in 1994 of a provision guaranteeing enjoyment of human rights without prejudice to gender and was impressed with the work being done by the Equal Status Council.

10. The Committee commended the emphasis placed by the Government on the eradication of violence and the establishment of a Committee to ascertain the extent and causes of violence in the home as well as the allocation of an emergency ward to rape victims in the city hospital. The Committee also commended the passage of a law making the State Treasury responsible for the payment of damages to the victims of violence as well as the formation of a Men's Committee aimed at sensitizing men to the problems resulting from violent behaviour.

11. The Committee was gratified about plans by the Government of Iceland to report periodically to the public on the Platform for Action.

12. The Committee viewed with appreciation the establishment of a Children's Ombudsperson to promote and safeguard the rights of children.

13. The Committee noted with satisfaction the fact that women now represented 50 per cent of university graduates.

Principal subjects of concern

14. The Committee noted the lack of statistics in the report and Iceland's failure to comply with general recommendation 9, but noted with appreciation the additional data supplied during the response to the Committee's questions.

15. The Committee was very concerned about the wide differential in the wages earned by women, which were considerably lower than those of men, and that this could be explained only on the grounds of sex.

16. Further concern was expressed over the fact that a significantly higher proportion of men held administrative positions in both the public and private sectors, while women surpassed men in jobs requiring no vocational training.

17. The Committee viewed with concern the lack of adequate information on certain articles of the Convention, particularly article 12, which addresses the health care of women.

18. The Committee regretted that rural women frequently had fewer opportunities for employment outside the home than men or those living in urban areas.

Suggestions and recommendations

19. The Committee recommended that in subsequent periodic reports the Government of Iceland report fully on each article of the Convention.

20. The Committee recommended that the Government take steps to ensure that the Convention be made enforceable in the courts of Iceland.

21. The Committee recommended that in future statistics disaggregated by gender be included in the periodic reports and that the Government of Iceland comply with general recommendation 9.

22. The Committee recommended that urgent steps be taken to ensure that women earned the same and comparable wages as men in all areas of employment.

23. The Committee suggested that measures be taken in future to ensure that women were appointed to administrative positions and to ensure leadership roles in all fields of employment, for example, by adopting affirmative action programmes.

24. The Committee suggested that future reports reflect analyses of the impact of job evaluation exercises.

25. The Committee noted the intention of the Government of Iceland to achieve greater balance in family responsibilities by a revision of the act on maternity leave, but suggested nevertheless that mechanisms be devised to ensure men's participation in child care and domestic duties apart from maternity leave, due regard being paid to the longer hours of work undertaken by men.

26. The Committee recommended that steps be taken to correct the imbalance between men and women in part-time employment, having regard to the fact that the percentage of women undertaking part-time employment was much higher than that of men.

27. The Committee recommended that steps be taken to educate judicial personnel about the Convention.

28. The Committee considered that studies on the evaluation of unpaid work should be undertaken as regards both men and women despite the earlier initiative taken.

29. The Committee recommended that the position of rural women be improved in all areas, including opportunities for employment outside the home.

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