



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Summary record of the 510th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 5 July 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Abaka

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (continued)

Fourth and fifth periodic reports of Sweden (CEDAW/C/SWE/4, CEDAW/C/SWE/5, CEDAW/PSWG/2001/II/CRP.1/Add.4 and CEDAW/PSWG/2001/II/CRP.2/Add.4)

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

2. **Ms. Bergh** (Sweden) drew attention to her Government's open dialogue with women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations, whose work played a vital role in the promotion of gender equality and human rights and in the preparation of her delegation's periodic reports. In order to create a society in which women and men truly enjoyed equal rights, equal opportunities and equal responsibilities, her Government had from 1994 onwards made gender mainstreaming an integral aspect of policy-making. In coordination with and supported by the Minister for Gender Equality all ministers were responsible for ensuring gender equality within their respective policy areas.

3. Instead of focusing on special measures aimed at eliminating gender discrimination, gender equality had been made an integral part of all government activities. A number of mechanisms had been developed to support those efforts: statistics disaggregated by sex, support for gender expertise within ministries, training courses in gender equality and provision of tools for gender-based analyses. As a result, specific needs could be more easily identified and special measures with a greater long-term impact on equality between women and men could be implemented.

4. There had been a number of developments since the fifth report (CEDAW/C/SWE/5) in November 2000. Priority had been given to prevention of violence against women, for example, and better reporting routines and greater public awareness had increased the reporting rate although many cases certainly still went unreported. The first published in-depth investigation of violence against women unfortunately confirmed that it was widespread and frequent. Government bill

1997/98:55 on violence against women, adopted in 1998, provided for better treatment of female victims by the authorities.

5. Noting the importance of better understanding of crimes against women in order to better identify appropriate remedial measures, she said a training programme for criminal justice, social welfare and health-care personnel had been implemented and extensive training material for all levels of staff was currently available. In early 2001 the Government had also submitted a bill to Parliament with proposals on strengthening support for crime victims, including the possibility of free legal representation, which would be of particular benefit to women; that measure had entered into force on 1 July 2001.

6. Too little attention had been paid to violence against disabled women and the National Council on Violence Against Women had taken steps to raise awareness of that issue by publicizing a study by the Forum on Women and Disability in Sweden. An important objective of the Government's disability action plan was to train public employees in order better to support persons with disabilities.

7. Her Government supported men's organizations which were working against violence against women and a special project aimed at combating violence against immigrant women, prepared in dialogue with immigrant organizations, targeted immigrant men. Various treatment methods for men convicted of violence had been discussed at an international conference held in Sweden in December 2000 and the information provided would serve as a basis for further action.

8. The report submitted in March 2000 to the Parliamentary Committee on sexual offences suggested *inter alia* that new legislation on sexual crimes focus less on specific sexual acts than on the sexual nature of any infraction of the law and proposed the criminalization of trafficking in persons and children for sexual purposes. The issue of trafficking in women and children was a priority for her Government, and indeed for the European Union. In December 2000 the latter had proposed two framework decisions on trafficking in human beings and on the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, which included common definitions of trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation and forced labour as well as common penalties. During the Swedish presidency

of the European Union, a political agreement had been reached on common definitions and victim support. The question of common penalties remained to be resolved. In December 2000, Sweden had signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. At an international conference on women and democracy held in Vilnius, the Nordic and Baltic ministers had decided to launch a campaign against trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation in 2002, which would focus on men as purchasers of sexual services.

9. Since a new law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services had come into force on 1 January 1999, the number of known female prostitutes appeared to have declined in the three largest cities. Although her Government recognized that prohibition could never be more than a supplement to efforts to reduce prostitution and effect broader social change, it reflected its conviction that women's bodies should not be treated as commodities in trade.

10. Migrant women faced a higher risk of violence. Migrants from outside the European Economic Area who could demonstrate a link with a person domiciled in Sweden were granted a temporary residence permit, which became permanent after two years. In order to avoid situations where immigrant women who were victims of violence felt obliged to remain in an abusive relationship for fear of expulsion, the Aliens Act had been amended in 2000 so that the residence permit could be extended beyond the two-year limit if the applicant or the applicant's child had been subjected to violence. Enforcement of the amendment, had made the examination process for granting a residence permit more stringent. Both the applicant and the person domiciled in Sweden were thoroughly investigated, including by a personal interview; if the sponsor had a past history of violence against a sponsored individual or of violence against women or children in some other context, the application would be rejected. Arranged marriages were also investigated to ensure that an applicant had not been forced into a marriage.

11. Turning to the issue of asylum, she noted that the Aliens Act had provided protection to individuals who risked persecution because of their gender or sexual preference since 1997. Only a small percentage of women actually applied for asylum on the basis of gender-related persecution, such as genital mutilation.

In addition to that risk most women asylum-seekers were granted asylum on more compelling grounds. Still, the gender provision had served to focus attention on persecuted women and resulted in better protection for them. To that end, acknowledging the importance of training the personnel handling asylum investigations, the Migration Board had presented a report on guidelines for improving attention to women's need for protection. In addition to mainstreaming a gender perspective into integration policy, immigrant women had been specially targeted and the National Integration Office and the State Inheritance Fund supported projects aimed at improving the situation for immigrant girls and young women.

12. The Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination was mandated to eliminate discrimination and monitor employers' efforts to actively promote ethnic diversity in the workplace. In 1999, her Government had been the first to appoint an Ombudsman against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. His task was to combat discrimination against homosexual and bisexual women and men in the workplace as well as all areas of society. The objective of that legislation was to create a society free of intolerance where each individual was treated with respect.

13. Despite progress, much remained to be done to ensure that women were fairly represented in the public sector. In 2000 women constituted 46 per cent of the ordinary members of central government boards, 42 per cent of regional boards and 42 per cent and 48 per cent respectively of municipal and county council boards, against a 2001 goal of 50 per cent. In the private sector, however, only 5.2 per cent of members of boards of directors were women. In an attempt to focus attention on that situation, the Minister for Gender Equality and the Minister of Industry, Labour and Communications hosted a conference every year for trade and industry representatives. The Minister for Gender Equality had also appointed a group of senior management representatives from the private sector to confer on gender equality issues. Business was being offered a new incentive to apply gender equality as a tool to attract and keep employees and to promote economic growth. Such a "growth-oriented approach" was an important complement to traditional methods of countering discrimination.

14. Noting that equal access to education was a crucial factor in the promotion of equality for women,

she regretfully pointed out that universities and colleges were still dominated by a powerful gender-based structure which led to a gender-disaggregated labour market and, although women made up almost 60 per cent of undergraduate students, the participation of women decreased progressively at higher levels of education and only 13 per cent of professors were women. In recognition of the effectiveness of recruitment targets for women professors in 1997 to 1999, the Government planned to set new and higher targets for a larger number of universities. Universities and colleges were also required to report on actions taken to achieve more equal gender distribution in undergraduate programmes; it had succeeded in increasing the number of women in traditionally male-dominated fields such as technology, but not in increasing the number of men in traditionally female-oriented fields. More equal distribution was crucial to the creation of an equal society.

15. In the labour market, unemployment had dropped considerably during the preceding three years and unemployment among women was lower than among men. There continues to be a wide gap between the sexes with regard to occupational and educational choices, however, while gender distribution had improved as a result of the expansion of the public sector during the 1960s and 1970s, with the public sector becoming the largest employer of women, efforts would continue to reduce gender disaggregation in the labour market. In August 2001, the Swedish National Labour Market Board, which had been allocating funds to reduce gender disaggregation would present its report and the Swedish National Board for Industrial and Technical Development would expand its special information, training and consultation programmes aimed at increasing the number of women entrepreneurs. A committee had also been appointed to ensure that the relevant programmes broke traditional behaviour patterns early in life.

16. Institutions of higher education would also play an important role in reducing gender disaggregation in the labour market. Although levels of employment for men and women were almost the same, with 80 per cent of women between the ages of 20 and 64 in the labour force, a large proportion worked part-time, i.e. between 20 and 34 hours per week. There had been no significant decline in involuntary part-time unemployment, which was especially prevalent in women-dominated fields such as health care; the

Government was considering the possibility of exploring measures to remedy that situation.

17. In order to reduce discrimination against women in the labour market, it was important to break traditional gender behaviour patterns within the family and reconcile family and work. Accordingly, the Government intended to enable parents to use their parental benefits to reduce their working hours in a more flexible way and, effective January 2002, the parental benefit would be extended by 30 days, giving fathers two months in order to encourage them to assume a more active role in caring for the children. One of the initiatives taken by the Government to encourage women and men to share family responsibilities was the magazine "The New Life", distributed to all new parents during Sweden's presidency of the European Union.

18. On the subject of equal pay, she noted that women's wages on average equalled 83 per cent of men's wages and stressed the need to study the underlying reasons for pay differentials in order to prevent discrimination. Wage-related statistics must provide more information on differences in wages. The National Mediation Office, established in 2000, with responsibility for public statistics, was instructed to provide gender-disaggregated wage statistics, promote an efficient wage process and analyse that process from a gender perspective. Wages were determined through the collective bargaining process, which had been advantageous for women, who were often in the lower-income brackets. The Government provided a framework for negotiations, for example, through legislation on gender discrimination. The provisions of the Equality Act relating to wage discrimination also obligated employers and trade unions to resolve all discriminatory wage differences.

19. With regard to follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, she noted that the Platform for Action reflected her Government's gender equality policy and, like other European Union member States, it was developing indicators to evaluate progress in the 12 critical areas. To date, indicators had been developed in the areas of women and decision-making and reconciliation of work and family, with the pay gap between women and men next on the agenda. Her Government had worked actively to integrate a gender perspective into its international development operations and would continue to promote human rights worldwide. She also recalled that Sweden had

signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on 10 December 1999 and noted that the ratification process, currently under way, would be concluded in 2002.

20. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that, judging from the fourth and fifth periodic reports, the State party had achieved progress whenever article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention had been rigorously applied to specific targets, and even quotas, but that it was lagging behind with respect to equality in the private sector and trade unions. She wondered whether issues such as wage disparity, education and stereotyping, which had not changed significantly in the past 25 years, would benefit from stricter measures. With regard to stereotyping, she wished to know whether parental training (CEDAW/C/SWE/4, pp. 27 and 28 and CEDAW/C/SWE/5, p. 19) and gender equality training for teacher were mandatory, and whether such training was reflected in teachers' pay. An overall mandatory national policy — not isolated projects — was vital to achieving progress in those areas. Beyond mere consultations with employers' associations, the Swedish Government must make a real effort to encourage trade unions to be more active in dealing with pay discrimination and perhaps to rethink their 30-year-old approach of seeking to increase women's pay by demanding raises at the lower wage levels.

21. Similarly, while she was pleased by the establishment of the National Centre for Battered Women, it was not clear why its funding had been reduced from SKr 3 to 1 million and why there was no national policy on shelters for battered women or some framework law under which local initiatives could be subsidized in order to ensure more uniform services and facilities throughout the country.

22. Praising Sweden's statement in its fourth periodic report that it might not accept the entry into force of treaties with States that made far-reaching reservations to the Convention, she enquired whether that novel approach meant that Sweden would actually enter into a dispute with reserving States under articles 28 and 29 of the Convention.

23. **Ms. Acar**, while commending the State party for the strong presence of women in high-level political posts, higher education and the labour force, and for its culture of supportiveness, expressed disappointment at the slow pace of progress in achieving gender equality in the economic realm. The whole world looked to Sweden as a model and it enjoyed a kind of myth of

gender equality which had yet to become a reality. Significant wage differences and a sex-segregated labour market perpetuated pay discrimination and inequalities seemed to be more pronounced among better educated women who lacked the support of trade unions and had to negotiate their salaries on their own. She wondered why highly educated women in Sweden were not appropriately valued in the job market.

24. Another rebuff of the myth of equality was women's poor representation on the boards of government-controlled companies — 28 per cent in the public sector and even less in the private sector — and, since the late 1980s, the decline in the number of women who presided over such governing boards. She wondered whether that was a continuing trend and whether any measures were being taken to increase the number of female presiding officers. She also enquired about the trend in women's representation in trade unions. She would appreciate information on the percentage of women ambassadors, and on whether there were gender-based differences in the posting of women and men, particularly when it came to the more politically sensitive locations. She welcomed measures to increase the number of women professors but would be grateful for details on any differences in pay between male and female professors. She also enquired about the existence of specific, target-oriented programmes to ensure that migrant women were not subjected to double discrimination — within their own communities and in society at large.

25. **Ms. González** welcomed the State party's strategy for combating violence against women because it included preventive measures and also provided for the prosecution of offenders. The measures taken by the Swedish Government to prevent sex-related crimes were encouraging and should be emulated by other countries. Neither the fourth nor fifth periodic reports, the State party's answers to the list of issues nor its introductory presentation gave statistics on the extent of domestic violence or the age and other characteristics of its most common victims. She welcomed the adoption in Sweden of measures to eradicate sexual exploitation of children and child pornography. Some indications of the extent to which such commerce existed in Sweden, if at all, and whether Sweden served as a transit country, would be useful.

26. **Ms. Gaspard** asked why the question of equality was being dealt with by the Ministry of Industry,

Labour and Communications (e.g., for reasons of efficiency or for technical reasons). While hailing the successful representation of women in political life, she noted disparities in the representation of women in the general courts and the general administrative courts (17 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively). It would be useful to know whether any measures were being taken to remedy those disparities. She also wondered whether there had been any fresh ideas about how to deal with sexist advertising beyond the possibility of revising the Instrument of Government or the Freedom of Press Act, as proposed in the fourth periodic report. Noting the effectiveness of the 1999 law on prostitution, she requested details on the use of the additional funds allocated to police to deal with clandestine prostitution.

27. She enquired about the results of a highly commendable initiative of the Government to finance additional training of local leaders, who had the capacity to address stereotyping problems on the ground, in their own communities. It was a fitting initiative in a country which had realized much progress in decentralization; perhaps successful local experiences could even be copied at the national level.

28. She was pleased that the State party planned to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention in the coming year.

29. **Ms. Ytterberg** (Sweden), Officer in the Ministry of Education, agreed with Ms. Schöpp-Schilling that teacher education was crucial to changing young people's attitudes. Parliament had recently adopted legislation requiring knowledge and training of all teachers in gender issues and equality, regardless of the subject or level at which they taught. Additional resources had been allocated for research in teacher education and teaching methods. Moreover, since 1959, teachers had been instilling basic democratic values, including gender equality, in their students through Sweden's common basic values project.

30. Higher education degrees in certain areas, including midwifery, law, nursing, teaching, medicine and psychology were also being emphasized with a view to enhancing gender equality.

31. **Ms. Bergh** (Sweden) said that pay discrimination was a difficult problem, and agreed that it seemed to be taking too long to resolve it; however, new legal provisions had recently been enacted and should prove to be efficient tools in addressing the pay discrimination. The legislative provisions concerning

cooperation between employers' and employees' representatives called for equalization of pay and other conditions of employment for work or of equal value, and to promotion of equal opportunities for wage development between women and men. A new, more descriptive definition of "work of equal value" had been adopted. Employers were required to study regulations and practice concerning pay and other terms of employment, examine collective wage agreements to ensure they contained no provisions which could cause indirect discrimination, and examine pay differentials to determine whether they were discriminatory. The legislation now also included a provision enabling trade unions to obtain previously confidential information about the individual salaries of all employees in the private sector. This recourse remedied the earlier situation in which the trade unions had had great difficulty in assessing private-sector pay differentials. Employers were required to report annually on the conclusions they had reached regarding the pay gap and on measures to be taken to reduce it. The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman had recently brought four cases before the Labour Court, relating to the issue of equal pay for work of equal value, and she hoped that the outcomes would be positive.

32. Her Government believed that the trade unions had been greatly encouraged by those new provisions, which would enable them to analyse the pay gap properly. They had taken an active part in the drafting of those provisions.

33. **Ms. Mansnerus** (Sweden), referring to an earlier question relating to the funding of the National Centre for Battered Women, said that the Centre had continued to receive funding from the central Government after 1999, but stressed that under the Swedish system, such medical and social care was funded at the municipal and county levels. The Centre was therefore being funded mostly by the county council of Uppsala, and by the University of Uppsala which was conducting research in that area. Many shelters for battered women were run by non-governmental organizations, but the funding was provided by the municipalities concerned. The reformed legislation implemented in 1998 required the social services to provide care for battered women.

34. The statistics concerning violence showed that most acts of violence took place between people who knew each other. It was further estimated that two thirds of prostitution took place indoors, clandestinely. The National Board of Health and Welfare was

currently holding discussions with the “prostitution centres” in three major cities, in order to find ways of reaching out to those engaged in concealed prostitution: for example, the staff of restaurants and bars had been trained to be aware of the problem.

35. **Ms. Bergh** (Sweden) added that, thanks to the 1998 Act prohibiting the purchase of sexual services, the police had been able to carry out raids on several brothels.

36. **Mr. Berselius** (Sweden), responding to a question relating to reservations by States parties to the Convention, said that if his Government considered a reservation to be unlawful it would so inform the Secretariat of the United Nations; in some cases it would also raise the matter bilaterally with the State concerned.

37. **Ms. Bergh** (Sweden), referring to the “myth” of gender equality, said that it was dangerous for a country to be singled out as a leading example and she was aware that much remained to be done in Sweden. As for pay differentials, some of them were due to gender segregation in the labour market. Most women were employed in the public sector, where wages were lower than in the male-dominated private sector. There was some evidence that more women were moving towards private-sector jobs, but there was no sign of men moving towards public-sector employment.

38. **Ms. Schmidt** (Sweden), responding to a question relating to the proportion of women chairpersons on government boards, said that the figure for 2001 was 28 per cent, compared to 34 per cent in 1997 and 1998. Unfortunately, the Government did not have the same means of influencing the appointment of the chairpersons as it had for the ordinary members of the boards. Measures had been taken to improve gender equality in the membership of regional boards and of policy organs of trade unions. Women made up 33 per cent of the executive committee of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation and 27 per cent of the executive committee of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employers with the figure at 44 per cent in the case of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations.

39. In connection with the problems affecting immigrant women, a crisis telephone line had been set up with Government funding. It was staffed by immigrant women, and the service was provided in 12 languages.

40. **Ms. Bergh** (Sweden), referring to the membership of Government boards, added that the Government usually asked those nominating candidates to put forward one female and one male candidate, but that it did not always prove to be feasible. Another part of the strategy in that regard was to publish yearly statistics in the hope that decision makers would be motivated to improve the situation.

41. **Mr. Berselius** (Sweden), referring to a question concerning the proportion of women among Sweden’s senior diplomatic staff, said that of the total of 117 ambassadors and consuls general, 12 per cent had been women in 1999, compared with 13 per cent in 1995 and seven per cent in 1990. The figure had stood at 17 per cent in spring 2001, and it was hoped that it would increase to 19 or 20 per cent in the autumn. Among newly-appointed ambassadors and consuls general, the figure was expected to reach 31 per cent. To give a few examples: Sweden’s ambassadors to Austria, Finland, Kenya, Luxembourg, Singapore and Zambia were women; however, the ambassadors in London, Paris and Washington, D.C. were men.

42. The substantial generation shift expected in the next decade, would tend to diminish the gender imbalance. Already in high-ranking foreign-service posts just below the ambassadorial level, the proportion of women stood at 38 per cent and was expected to reach 40 per cent by the end of 2001.

43. **Ms. Trost** (Sweden), responding to a question on types of domestic violence, said that there had been about 19,000 reported cases of assault against women in 1999, of which about 500 had been committed by persons close to the victim, and 10 to 15 per cent had been committed by women. There had been 879 reported instances of violence against children aged six or under, and 5,040 against children aged between seven and 14. Children also suffered from violence when they witnessed acts of violence committed against their mothers.

44. In 1998 a committee on child abuse and related issues had been created and its final report would be presented in August 2001. It was investigating what was meant by violence against children and what further action was required in that area.

45. **Ms. Bergh** (Sweden) said that her Government recently was considering an extensive report on battered women but had not yet reached any

conclusions. Clearly, different types of violence required different forms of treatment.

46. Migrant women were vulnerable to discrimination within their own communities as well as by society as a whole, and the national integration policy contained special measures for their protection. Young immigrant women and girls often experienced a culture clash in the new environment, and an internal working group to explore the need for measures and legislation to address that culture clash would hold a seminar with all concerned Ministers to determine whether further action was needed. The National Integration Office was addressing violence stemming from differing cultural views through the "Dialogue Project."

47. **Ms. Ytterberg** (Sweden), in reply to a question about the number of women professors, said that currently 13 per cent of professors were women, compared to 6 per cent in 1991. The largest number of women professors were found in education and related fields; the smallest in technology. The Government had set targets for recruitment of more women in more universities. The generational shift mentioned earlier might contribute to solving the problem, but the Government would continue to monitor the situation from a gender perspective to ensure that the discrimination was not structural.

48. While no national study had been conducted on the pay gap between men and women professors, she confirmed that women did receive lower wages and a lower level of funding for research and assistance. The Government would investigate the problem.

49. **Ms. Bergh** (Sweden), in response to Ms. Gaspard, said that the Equal Opportunity Division was attached to the Ministry of Agriculture not for political reasons, but because the Minister of Agriculture herself had asked to assume the responsibility because of her personal knowledge and interest.

50. Sexism in advertising, was not currently regulated by law in Sweden. The issue had been debated in Parliament, and it had been determined that a legal prohibition of sexism in advertising would require an amendment to the Constitution. There was some support for such legislation provided it was the only alternative available to regulate the offensive advertising, the advertising was so offensive as to call for a restriction on freedom of speech, and only discriminatory advertising would be covered. However,

thus far no political agreement had been reached. In the meantime, there was a council on ethical advertising, which could receive complaints.

51. A bill ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention would be submitted to Parliament for adoption during 2002.

52. **Ms. Corti** said that she had been present when Sweden had submitted its first periodic report to the Committee, and heartily agreed that Sweden should be held up as an example of best practices in including women in decision-making and Government. Its success in that area made the relative lack of progress towards equal employment opportunity somewhat surprising, however. She was also surprised at the levels of violence against women reported, another indication that there was an imbalance of power between men and women. The Government response to the problem seemed somewhat delayed.

53. In both its written report and the oral presentation, the Swedish delegation had stated that a strategy of gender mainstreaming was the most efficient tool for achieving equality, but in her experience, an office, body or Ministry for gender equality at the highest level of Government had been most effective in achieving that goal.

54. Sweden should be congratulated for its progress in addressing the concerns of migrant women. She was surprised, however, that during the Swedish presidency of the European Union, it had not taken the initiative to discuss policies on prostitution with a view to harmonize the diverging views within the Union.

55. **Ms. Ferrer Gómez** said that the working group and forthcoming seminar on immigrant women was very important; measures against violence to which they were subjected must be taken at the national level in addition to local projects. She would be interested to learn more about what Sweden was doing to combat the rise in racism and xenophobia among young people and the steps it had taken to educate them and to prevent and punish such violence. She would also like to hear about how the rights of Roma and Sami women to work and education were being protected.

56. She would like to know if any updated figures were available on the participation of women in the judiciary. She would also like to know if the new legislation on prostitution contained sanctions against procurers of prostitutes. Given that equal access to

education was ensured in the public school system, she would like to hear more about equality in private schools as well as what obstacles had been encountered in implementing equality legislation.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.