



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

Distr.: General  
16 November 2016

English only

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**  
Sixty-fifth session

**Summary record of the 1455th meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 9 November 2016, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Hayashi

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(*continued*)

*Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Estonia*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

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

*Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Estonia (CEDAW/C/EST/5-6, CEDAW/C/EST/Q/5-6 and Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Estonia took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the promotion of gender equality in his country was addressed mainly through the 2016-2023 Welfare Development Plan, which set out actions designed to ensure more balanced participation of women and men at all levels of political decision-making, to address gender stereotypes and to close the gender pay gap. Preparations were under way for the fourth Gender Equality Monitoring survey. The results would be made public and would provide an overview of attitudes towards women and men in society. Gender equality issues were also addressed by the Department of Equality Policies, which drafted relevant legislation, coordinated gender mainstreaming efforts and dealt with the issues pertaining to domestic violence and trafficking in women.
3. The Ministry of Social Affairs coordinated family policies, prepared gender equality indicators and coordinated research and data analysis efforts relating to gender. The Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner monitored compliance with the Gender Equality Act and the Equal Treatment Act, provided expert opinions on equality issues, analysed the impact of legislation on men and women's status and advised government agencies on legislation and amendments. Several organizations, including the Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre, undertook research on gender equality.
4. The comprehensive Development Strategy for Reducing Violence provided for activities intended to prevent and reduce violence in all its forms, including human trafficking, and for the creation of a network of officials and experts from the governmental and non-governmental sectors with knowledge of the issues at stake. The Victim Support Act had been amended to provide for the delivery of assistance to victims of trafficking via the Social Insurance Board and for the establishment of a more sustainable system of NGO-led services, including housing, counselling and translation services. Guidelines on identifying and supporting victims had been amended several times to align them with the relevant legislation.
5. Under a programme focusing on domestic and gender-based violence that was funded by the Norway Grants organization, services for victims of trafficking were developed, research into their needs undertaken and prosecutors and other stakeholders trained. Each year, NGOs provided services for around 300 sex workers, mostly females, out of around 700 in the country. The Penal Code was due to be amended in 2017, and a proposal to make it an offence to purchase sex from a human trafficking victim was under consideration.
6. The Victim Support Act had been helpful in increasing the sustainability of support services delivery for women victims of violence and ensuring that funding would be provided to organizations that delivered those services, which were free of charge for women and their children. There was at least one shelter in each county offering women victims of domestic violence temporary accommodation and counselling. As services for victims of sexual violence were now coordinated by the Social Insurance Board, they were considered part of the official victim support system. A recent study on gender-based violence had found that most citizens did not consider domestic violence to be a private matter. Comprehensive sensitivity training was, furthermore, given to police officers, prosecutors, judges and victim support workers.

7. Progress in women's representation in political life had been made with the election of the country's first female President and the appointment of two female ministers. Awareness-raising would be required prior to the introduction of any quotas for women in elections in order to address negative perceptions among the general public and politicians of such arrangements.

8. In the educational domain, gender equality was one of the core values that schools should consider in their management processes and when designing study materials. A 2011 survey had shown that teachers' views of gender were no less stereotypical than those of the general public. Hence, projects had been developed to raise awareness of gender among teachers and mainstream gender in teacher training.

9. Positive feedback had been received from participants in the educational project led by the Praxis Centre for Policy Studies mentioned in paragraph 37 of the replies to the list of issues, and the learning tools developed during the project had been made available on the Centre's website. A women's association had created a website that collated research and materials to assist teachers in incorporating the gender perspective into their work and provided information on gender and education to the general public. Training for head teachers on gender mainstreaming in school management was being provided with funding from the Gambling Tax Council.

10. Campaigns to raise awareness of the gender stereotypes that continued to affect career choices had been undertaken. In one such campaign, a series of videos had been produced that had since been used extensively by the media and NGOs. The careers days organized every two years by the Ministry of Social Affairs encouraged boys and girls to learn about professions traditionally associated with the opposite sex.

11. Equal Pay Day was celebrated annually to raise awareness of the gender pay gap in Estonia, one of the widest such gaps in the world. In 2016, adolescents had been invited to participate in a competition on the topic of gender equality and equal pay. There were plans to give the Labour Inspectorate oversight of actions to promote equal pay for equal work. Related guidelines and training would be provided and several provisions of the Gender Equality Act, including the definition of equal pay for work of equal value, would be clarified.

12. The Ministry of Social Affairs had undertaken an analysis of parental leave and benefits in an attempt to balance the distribution of parental leave between mothers and fathers and to ensure that the system was flexible, clear and fit for purpose. The Ministry had recommended the adoption of alternative policies, including the possibility for parents to share parental leave while working part-time.

#### *Articles 1 to 6*

13. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that while the State party's decision to sign the Istanbul Convention was commendable, the provisions contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on substantive gender equality were not well-known or applied in Estonia. The number of complaints of discrimination on the grounds of gender had risen slightly in 2009, but had since levelled out.

14. She questioned the effectiveness of the decision to change the title of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner and widen the Commissioner's mandate to include aspects beyond gender equality, since that shifted the focus away from the main issue. She would welcome the delegation's comments on those changes and on the working relationship between the Commissioner and the Chancellor of Justice.

15. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the possible loss of focus on gender equality had been discussed when the changes to the role of Commissioner had been introduced and a balance

had been struck that allowed gender equality to remain a priority. The ratification of the Istanbul Convention and introduction of legislation on gender-related issues had also prompted discussion of the problems affecting women and highlighted the need to take gender equality and non-discrimination against women more fully into account.

16. **Ms. Pakosta** (Estonia) said that the decision to widen her role as Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner had allowed her to investigate complaints of intersectional discrimination, which was particularly common among the country's significantly large ethnic Russian population. She enjoyed constructive cooperation with the Chancellor of Justice, with whom she was in regular contact and shared findings. She was informed of most complaints of discrimination that had a gender component; those complaints represented a relatively small proportion of the total number lodged.

17. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that, although the issue of intersectional discrimination was indeed important, the importance of the gender dimension must not be overlooked, a point that must be reiterated to the country's institutions. She asked what effort was made by the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner and the Chancellor of Justice to improve women's access to justice and whether those working in the legal system were familiar with the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination as defined by the Convention.

18. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that, while the Government would certainly follow those matters up, gender equality remained the cornerstone of all policy change assessments. A major concern that had arisen in the context of the current reform of the pension system was the potential pension gender gap that could open up owing to the different use that men and women made of parental leave. The Government was encouraging fathers to participate more fully in family life, and legal amendments to be introduced in the near future should support that objective. In the meantime, steps were being taken to ensure that the pension reforms did not leave retired women worse off than men as a result of having taken parental leave to bring up their children. The key for the Government was to find different solutions in order to embed gender equality in all policymaking. While much remained to be done in that regard, significant progress had been made over the past 10 years.

19. **Ms. Pakosta** (Estonia) said that over 70 per cent of the complaints received by the Office of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner concerned gender issues, as did the majority of its documentation and information sessions. While the procedures for submitting complaints to the Commissioner and to the Office of the Chancellor of Justice had been established in legislation, the idea of updating the instructions to make them more user-friendly was currently under consideration. Both the Chancellor of Justice and the Commissioner had been commended in 2016 on the clarity of their messages. The two sides had regular meetings to discuss working methods and cooperation on different topics.

20. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that part of the mandatory preparation process when developing new legislation was an analysis of the impact that the legislation would have, including the gender impact. The Ministry of Social Affairs was responsible for verifying that a thorough gender-impact analysis had been conducted prior to consultations on any draft laws. In-depth training on gender mainstreaming had been provided for many ministerial officials, and an interministerial gender mainstreaming working group had been established.

21. **Ms. Pomeranzi** asked how the Chancellor of Justice and the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner helped women to gain access to justice.

22. **Ms. Pakosta** (Estonia) said that when a complaint alleging discrimination was filed with the Chancellor or the Commissioner, the receiving body issued a final decision or ruling, which could then be raised before the courts, if the complainant so wished. In practice, both bodies often brought the parties together to try to find a solution.

23. **Ms. Gabr** said that, while the State party had made significant progress in gender equality in legislative terms, officials reportedly had limited knowledge of gender equality goals, which might indicate a lack of political will in that regard. Moreover, participation in gender equality training was reportedly a voluntary exercise for officials. Given that there was no plan of action on gender equality, she asked what measures had been taken to implement the Gender Equality Act. She wished to know whether a national strategy for the implementation of the Act existed that included indicators for evaluating progress, a clear delineation of responsibilities, mandatory training on gender equality for national and local government officials and opportunities for participation by civil society. She would welcome additional information on the apparent lack of funding that had caused some gender equality NGOs to close down and on the fact that the State party depended on external funding for some of its gender equality programmes. She would appreciate more details on the human and financial resources allocated to the Gender Mainstreaming Working Group. She requested additional information on the mandate, responsibility and visibility of the Gender Equality Council and on how the State party ensured the coordination of the work of the different bodies focusing on gender equality.

24. **Ms. Nadaraia** asked what steps had been taken to raise politicians' awareness of the various temporary special measures that could be adopted to increase women's participation in political life, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004). She requested additional information on specific areas in which women were underrepresented and disadvantaged. She asked whether the Government planned to introduce quotas for women's participation in all managerial boards in the public and the private sectors and in all national and local government bodies or, at least, to impose an obligation to have both genders represented. It would be useful to know whether the Government planned to promote the conduct of assessments with respect to unequal gender relations in order to enable positive transformations to be made. She asked whether the State party would apply temporary special measures in the fields in which there was significant gender discrimination and that with a view also to improving the situation of disadvantaged groups, such as women with disabilities, older women, women from minorities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women.

25. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the 2016-2023 Welfare Development Plan incorporated gender equality issues and had been designed based on a comprehensive analysis of the gender equality problems and challenges that currently faced Estonia. A publicly available action plan, throughout which gender equality was a cross-cutting theme, had been drawn up for the Development Plan. It would be reviewed annually to allow for improvements. A government plan to tackle gender inequality had been put in place for the first time, having been drawn up in consultation with a variety of stakeholders, including civil society, academia and the private sector. The granting of substantial, sustainable funding to civil society organizations was an area in which the Government was aware of the need to improve. Many projects currently depended on foreign aid. Steps were being taken to create more reliable sources of funding for key partners. Plans were under way to reform the Gambling Tax Council and create a more strategic partnership funding scheme for the NGO sector, which would allow the Government to enter into longer framework agreements with key partners.

26. **Ms. Kanter** (Estonia) said that, since the current trend was to reduce the number of development plans, it would be difficult to introduce a development plan specifically for gender equality. The Gender Equality Department had evolved over time. In 2010, it had covered family policy, which now had been taken up by a separate department. The issue of equal treatment had been included in the mandate of the Gender Equality Department in 2009. One reason the name had been changed to the Equality Policies Department in 2014 had been to indicate that the Department addressed equality in a wider sense. Nonetheless,

the only head of policy in the Department was the gender equality head, and there continued to be two members of staff working on gender equality. In October 2013, the Government had established the Gender Equality Council, which marked a major change as it was an advisory body to the Government.

27. **Ms. Einman** (Estonia) said that the Gender Mainstreaming Working Group and the Gender Equality Council were both funded by the Government. The Council, which was currently composed of 25 members, had the right to spend part of its funding on research. Efforts were ongoing with the Gender Mainstreaming Working Group to raise awareness among government officials about gender equality and related legislation. The possibility had been raised of including more than one member from each ministry in the Working Group in order to facilitate gender equality efforts.

28. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the issue of quotas for women's representation in the public and private sectors had given rise to much debate during the elaboration of the Welfare Development Plan. While the proposal to set quotas had met with much support, it had not been accepted for the current year. There had, however, been agreement on the need for the topic to be reconsidered in the future, for the Government to set an example to the private sector and for more research to be carried out on quotas.

29. **The Chair**, speaking as a member of the Committee, requested information on the use and scope of temporary special measures to increase women's participation in political life, on corporate boards and in education.

30. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that, in the light of reports that gender equality bodies had recently been downsized, it would be useful to know to what degree the Government was supporting them specifically and the gender equality policy more generally. She asked whether the Government had considered the possibility of introducing gender-based budgeting, which could bring about a significant step forward in the implementation of the Gender Equality Act.

31. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the Government had indeed relied heavily on foreign aid and was currently in the process of renegotiating a new aid package, with the focus firmly on gender equality. Significant efforts had been deployed and were ongoing to ensure that gender equality was not perceived as the exclusive purview of the Ministry of Social Affairs, but a matter on which all State bodies must focus.

32. **Ms. Pakosta** said that, while the staff of the Office of the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner had been reduced from 11 to 5 in 2016, the budget had been almost doubled for 2017. If that level of budgeting could be maintained in future years, the Office would be able to deliver on its mandate efficiently, particularly as one of its goals was to fulfil the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

33. Given that the overview prepared on gender-based budgeting by the Office had not been favourably received, the current scope of gender-based budgeting was limited to the area of sport. A meeting between the Office, Tallinn University and the Estonian Olympic Committee had been held to discuss equal funding for both sexes in sport from the outset. That would hopefully be a good practice that would be followed in other fields.

34. **Ms. Einman** (Estonia) said that the Welfare Development Plan included the objective of establishing better gender balance in both the private and the public sectors. The current need was to continue to raise awareness among politicians and the general public in order to counter the prevailing view that quotas gave women an unfair advantage.

35. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the Government recognized that there was a lack of resources in several fields. It was striving to improve cooperation and the management of

funds in order to maintain the focus on gender equality, find new solutions and react to new opportunities as they arose.

36. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that the head of delegation had indicated that there had been progress on gender balance and gender education in school curricula. However, in his opening statement he had said only that schools “should” take gender equality into account in school management and when compiling study materials. He had also said that a survey had shown that teachers’ views were no less stereotypical than those of society at large. It would appear, then, that stronger measures were needed, such as mandatory gender training for teachers. She said she would like to know whether the State party had considered running media campaigns on intersectional discrimination.

37. She looked forward to the ratification by Estonia of the Istanbul Convention. The Government was clearly aware that it would have to meet certain obligations in preparation for ratification, and she wondered why it did not consider the possibility of introducing a specific law on gender-based violence against women rather than inserting new — and moreover gender-neutral — articles into existing legislation. In addition, the Istanbul Convention required the introduction of a separate offence of sexual harassment, which was not a measure currently being considered by the State party. Measures taken in implementation of the Istanbul Convention were required to demonstrate a gendered understanding of violence against women but she failed to discern such an understanding in the relevant articles of the Penal Code.

38. She questioned the use of the expression “sexual intercourse” and the criterion of force included in the State party’s definition of rape. In Estonian case law the offence was interpreted narrowly, requiring evidence of physical harm. Under the Istanbul Convention the sole criterion was non-consensual sexual penetration; there was no reference to force.

39. Courts in Estonia seemed to take a lenient view of domestic violence. The State party’s report pointed to a low rate of arrest and few prison sentences in domestic violence cases. Moreover, half the cases went to conciliation, which was very problematic, as conciliation worked only when associated with mandatory treatment for the perpetrator; more often than not it was a means of forcing the woman to surrender her rights and turn a blind eye to the perpetrator’s behaviour.

40. **Ms. Gabr** said, in respect of human trafficking, that Estonia was a country of origin and transit. Most victims were women who were trafficked for the purposes of prostitution. Although commendable legislative measures had been taken to deal with human trafficking, it was still not clear exactly what kind of support victims were being offered. For example, a police report still had to be filed before a victim could receive support and assistance; that was bound to discourage victims and witnesses from coming forward, yet cooperation with victims and witnesses was extremely important in trafficking cases. She wondered whether the State party envisaged amending the Victim Support Act as a means of facilitating the investigation and prosecution of trafficking offences and also what steps were being taken to encourage police and labour inspectors to investigate trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation. She noted that action had been taken to train the police and diplomatic officials to deal with trafficking, but no such training had been offered to the judiciary, which was an extremely important stakeholder.

41. She said she would like to know how the State party supported NGOs and whether it helped to fund the shelters that they ran. Given the close links between trafficking and migration, she said that she would like to know more about the State party’s cooperation with neighbouring countries in combating trafficking. According to reports from alternative sources, only NGOs provided services to those trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. She would appreciate the delegation’s comments on those reports. Had the State party carried out studies to assess the degree of vulnerability among women belonging

to marginalized groups and their exposure to possible exploitation in prostitution. Lastly, she would welcome an outline of the bill on addressing the demand side of prostitution.

42. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that his Government hoped to ratify the Istanbul Convention by mid-2017. Steps were being taken by the social affairs and justice ministries to ensure that domestic law was brought into line with the Convention. In recent years Estonia had instituted structural reforms that directly related to gender equality and intersectional discrimination. Changes to employment regulations had been made to favour persons with disabilities and others whose access to the labour market was limited. A new law on social welfare was being developed to establish thresholds for access to social services and for needs assessments at the local level. Reforms were also under way in other areas.

43. **Ms. Luht** (Estonia) said she acknowledged that there was no separate law on domestic violence. In the State party's view, the best way to guarantee proper protection for victims was to improve existing legislation. The infliction of psychological abuse was defined as a criminal offence, as was threatening to kill or abuse a person or to damage his or her property. The legislation had been amended in 2015 to take account not just of physical suffering but also of the other consequences of such violence, such as mental health sequelae. A victim's financial dependence on the perpetrator counted as an aggravating circumstance. The legal definition of rape in the Penal Code had been changed and the use of force was no longer used as a criterion.

44. A new project involving prosecutors, judges and the Estonian Sexual Health Association had been instituted to improve the procedures for dealing with victims of sexual violence. Special services for victims of sexual violence had been put in place for the first time and, beginning in 2017, they would be coordinated by the Social Insurance Board. It was true that most domestic violence cases ended in conciliation. However, according to prosecutors and others involved in the process, women tended to prefer conciliation to court proceedings. Conciliation was only used with the woman's consent; it was probably less painful than a public court appearance. Women were not forced to give up their rights; they still had the right to a public hearing. In addition, in accordance with amendments introduced to the Code of Criminal Procedure, police officers and prosecutors were now required to inform victims of their right to receive support services and to be accompanied by a person of their choice when attending a court hearing.

45. Services to victims of human trafficking were organized under the auspices of the Social Insurance Board, a State institution. They were funded by the State but provided directly by an NGO with special expertise and long experience in dealing with trafficking issues. Similar arrangements were in place for women exploited in prostitution. Under an amendment to the Victim Support Act that would enter into force in the new year, the provision of services to victims of trafficking would no longer be conditional on the filing of a police report. Moreover, if NGO service providers suspected that they had identified a victim of trafficking, they would be able to inform the Board and request services.

46. Increasing attention was being paid to human trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation. Police officers, labour inspectors and customs and border officials were being trained in identifying victims and investigating cases, and the results obtained had been highly satisfactory to date. Members of the judiciary had received special training on trafficking issues in addition to the regular annual training that judges received. There was excellent cooperation internally, with an anti-trafficking network comprising various ministries, boards and NGOs having been established; and there was very close cooperation with the neighbouring Nordic and Baltic countries.

47. Prostitution was not regulated, but acts by third parties, such as aiding prostitution and pimping, were dealt with as offences against liberty as defined in the Penal Code. The



law as yet made no reference to the purchase or sale of sex but the amended legislation would criminalize the purchase of sex from trafficking victims as a form of aiding prostitution, a provision that would probably enter into force in 2018.

48. Estonia had carried out some studies into vulnerable groups. The most vulnerable groups were Russian-speaking women, women with little education and women who had experienced domestic violence. Most women in prostitution had suffered from domestic violence, either as children or in their adult life. The latest qualitative study, conducted in 2016, bore out the links between domestic violence and prostitution.

49. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the existing legal framework and services were adequate to deal with domestic violence; there was no plan to introduce a separate law.

50. **Ms. Kanter** (Estonia) said that the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Estonian Human Rights Centre had for many years run a project called “Diversity enriches”. Numerous activities were offered, such as seminars, courses and workshops for minority groups, with special attention being paid to combating multiple discrimination. Employers were advised on promoting equal treatment in their companies and guidelines had been produced in that connection.

51. **Ms. Pakosta** (Estonia) said that in the spring of 2016 a major multimedia project highlighting intersectional discrimination had been developed by the Estonian Broadcasting Corporation, the Ministry of Education and Tallinn University. Also in the spring of 2016, the Commissioner’s Office had helped the Labour Inspectorate to prepare material on the procedures for submitting a complaint of discrimination to the Labour Inspectorate. The usefulness of the material would be evaluated.

52. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that she would like to know where to find the legal provision defining psychological abuse as a criminal offence. She pointed out that economic abuse ought to be a separate offence, but that was not the case in Estonian law. With regard to the burden of proof in rape cases, according to the Istanbul Convention it was not the victim who needed to prove that force had been used but the perpetrator who was required to demonstrate that consent had been given; current Estonian law was not in line with international standards in that regard.

53. She would like to know what safeguards were in place to protect women entering conciliation proceedings. Were they entitled to separate representation in the conciliation sessions, for example? A recent study had shown that even the courts did not necessarily take domestic violence situations into account when ruling on child custody, so it might be legitimate to assume that that was an even greater risk in mere conciliation proceedings involving social workers and mediators. It was important to protect women’s and children’s interests.

54. **Ms. Luht** (Estonia) said that conciliation was carried out by specially trained victim support workers from the Social Insurance Board. Both victim and perpetrator were represented by the same person. In child-custody cases, child-protection specialists were usually invited to give evidence; their level of awareness of violence against women varied greatly, but a new training programme on violence against women was being prepared for them. Lastly, she wished to point out that stalking, forced marriage and female genital mutilation had been made criminal offences in line with the Istanbul Convention.

55. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that safeguards were in place to ensure that perpetrators complied with the terms and conditions of agreements reached through conciliation. Agreements were subject to follow-up by the mediator; if either party was found not to be in compliance, the prosecutor’s office could reopen the case. Thus, there was a strong motivating factor for perpetrators to comply with the agreement.

56. A new child protection system had been established, with regional coverage now being provided. In addition to mainstreaming and raising awareness of child protection issues, a special unit of the National Social Insurance Board handled the most difficult cases and provided support and advice to the municipalities. However, continued investment was necessary to ensure that a consistent approach was taken across the country. Strengthened child protection measures had been integrated into the ongoing regional reform plan. The largest municipality, which would be established by 2018, was to have specialized child protection officers.

57. The State had also established a fund for single parents whose former spouses were not fulfilling their child maintenance obligations, and there were plans to make access to certain privileges, such as driving licences, conditional upon sharing of parental responsibilities. In combination, such measures were having a positive impact on conciliation processes and raising awareness of the areas in which structural problems persisted. On the whole, progress was being made to address problems that were, directly or indirectly, related to gender equality.

*Articles 7 to 9*

58. **Ms. Nadaraia**, describing the status of women's representation in various levels of government, in economic decision-making roles and in the civil and diplomatic services, said she was concerned that women's representation had not improved, or had even declined, and that the use of gender quotas and other temporary special measures was not envisaged. Regarding Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, she wished to know whether any additional activities were planned by the Government to help promote its implementation internationally and to address women's underrepresentation in peace and reconciliation processes.

59. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that stateless persons in Estonia were more likely to be unemployed, impoverished and suffering from discrimination and social exclusion. Most stateless persons were living in predominantly Russian-speaking communities and had very little interaction with Estonians. While the State party was to be commended on its efforts to facilitate the acquisition of Estonian citizenship for older persons, persons with disabilities and children born to stateless parents, she wondered whether it might also consider establishing a fast-track channel to grant citizenship to teenagers who were 15-18 years old. She would be interested to know whether the State party had any plans to accede to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and to incorporate the definition of statelessness into its legislation in line with the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 32.

60. **Ms. Einman** (Estonia) said that there were plans to conduct awareness-raising activities for politicians and the private sector in respect of women's participation. The Gender Equality Council had ordered an analysis to be done of the Gender Equality Act. The first stage of the analysis had revealed that employers were not generally aware of their obligations under the Act. Amendments were therefore envisaged to address that issue. Other phases of the analysis included an assessment of women's low level of representation in the public and private sectors. Once the awareness-raising activities were completed and the full results of the analysis were known, a decision would be taken as to whether or not the Act should be amended to include specific gender quotas or other measures.

61. **Mr. Kuuse** (Estonia) said that the level of women's representation in the municipalities was also likely to have been impacted by the regional reforms that were under way in Estonia, since the number of municipalities was to be further reduced.

62. Turning to the issue of stateless persons in Estonia, he said that the number of stateless persons had fallen over the past few years and, while progress was admittedly slow,

things were moving in the right direction. Programmes designed to foster the involvement of stateless persons in wider society and provide them with access to language training had been devised. The eastern region of Estonia was, however, a special case. The majority of the population there was Russian-speaking and the region was particularly disadvantaged because of structural issues and high rates of unemployment. It was hoped that specific measures that had already been adopted would improve the situation. The Government had also made efforts to increase the use of Russian in seminars and meetings held with journalists and the general public. It recognized, however, that continuous monitoring and more inclusive policies were required.

63. **Ms. Pakosta** (Estonia), said that while some complaints of discrimination on the grounds of nationality had been upheld on the basis that language-related stipulations were inappropriate, in most cases no discrimination had been found. A booklet titled “I Know My Rights” had been published, in English and in Russian, to provide information on how to differentiate between perceived discrimination and direct discrimination. The real issue was the educational gap between Estonian speakers and speakers of other languages and, also, between speakers of other languages and Russian speakers. While the gap was certainly closing, more remained to be done to address it fully.

64. **Mr. Pung** (Estonia) said the latest figures showed that the number of persons with unidentified citizenship in Estonia was decreasing. In many cases, it was not an inability to acquire citizenship that was at issue, but rather the individual’s own choice not to take citizenship. Moreover, those persons were entitled, under the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, to work, to vote in local government elections and to travel freely in the Schengen area and to the Russian Federation, which were the main destinations they wished to go to in any case.

65. **Ms. Kallas** (Estonia) said that Estonia had adopted its second action plan for the period 2015-2019 to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Its three main objectives were to: improve the situation of women in conflict-affected areas, raise awareness, and enhance cooperation and information exchange. Concrete measures for implementation had been divided into subject areas and included actions to increase the number of women in positions related to peace and security in Estonia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was working with civil society to support the participation of women and women’s organizations in policymaking and in peace and security processes.

#### *Articles 10 to 14*

66. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao said that she wished to congratulate the State party on the excellent progress that it had made in increasing the participation of women and girls in education. That said, she was concerned by the problem of gender segregation in the education system. She would be interested to know: whether there were plans to address that problem as part of a national programme; what measures had been taken or were envisaged to encourage women and girls, and men and boys, to study non-traditional subjects; and whether careers advice was available at all levels of education. She would welcome information on the steps taken to modify school curricula, textbooks and other learning materials so as to promote gender equality and remove content that perpetuated gender roles and stereotypes. She also wished to know what measures were in place to monitor curricula and subject matter content at all levels of education. She would welcome information on how many women occupied high-ranking roles in academia, whether the State party intended to adopt temporary special measures or quotas to promote women’s advancement in academic positions, and what specific action had been taken to ensure that girls from vulnerable groups, including girls with disabilities, could have access to education.

67. **Mr. Bruun** said that, while progress had been made in the area of data collection relating to the labour market in Estonia, data were still lacking on the gender impact of the brain drain and of the migration of significant numbers of Estonian men to work in other European Union countries. Regarding women's representation in the labour market, he wished to know: whether specific measures were being taken to close the considerable gender pay gap in Estonia, whether consideration was being given to increasing pay transparency and how the State party intended to address the pension disparities arising from the gender pay gap.

68. He asked what was being done to promote women's representation on executive boards and in leadership positions in the private sector; what plans were being developed to address the shortage of childcare facilities; and whether a more flexible approach might be considered to allow for sharing of parental leave, rather than the proposed "use it or lose it" approach. Lastly, in noting that no cases of sexual harassment in the workplace appeared to have been dealt with by the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner or Labour Dispute Committees, he wondered whether the appropriate legal framework and mechanisms were in place to deal with the issue.

69. **Ms. Hofmeister** said that she wished to know what measures or policies were in place in the State party to curb rising levels of alcohol abuse, alcohol-related deaths and smoking, particularly among young women. She wondered what action was being taken to reduce the unacceptably long waiting times experienced by vulnerable groups of persons, in particular older persons and those with HIV/AIDS, when trying to book an appointment to see a general practitioner or a medical specialist. She asked why waiting times were so long and what provision was being made to ensure that the e-health strategic plan, which required Internet access, did not exclude older persons and those living in remote areas.

70. She was concerned by reports about a lack of information or access to medication and psychological services for persons diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, particularly for women and their children, and that the rate of infection among young women was on the increase. She would like to know to what extent the high-level HIV/AIDS committee had been successful in achieving the goal of reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS and whether related data could be provided. Lastly, she asked what measures had been taken to make abortions safe, whether contraceptives were covered by health-care insurance and whether there were plans to give non-Estonian citizens access to health-care insurance.

71. **The Chair** said that the delegation would have the opportunity to provide their responses in the afternoon session.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*