

Statement by
Ms. Vibeke Abel

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee

On behalf of the Government I am pleased to have the opportunity today to explain how Denmark translates the international obligations in the CEDAW into specific activities and legislation.

On a personal note, I would like to say that it is always with great respect that I enter the UN Building. To me, it represents the finest of international cooperation.

It is a privilege to have so many competent experts addressing Denmark's gender equality initiatives. It will help us improving the quality of our work.

The Danish Government is of the opinion that Denmark has come a long way to both formal and real gender equality. But many challenges and tasks still lie ahead.

The first twenty minutes of our presentation I will be speaking on behalf of the Danish Government, following this, the representatives of Greenland and the Faroe Islands will be giving a presentation on behalf of their Home Rule Governments.

Madam Chairperson

In Denmark, gender equality and women's equal rights are perceived as fundamental values. We cannot imagine a democratic society without gender equality. And we know that gender equality and women's full participation in society and the labour market are pre-conditions for economic growth.

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Madam Chairperson

The Parliament has just passed an amendment to the Act on Equal Pay, ordering large companies to compile gender-segregated pay statistics.

The legislation on equal treatment in the labour market was amended in December 2005. Now the Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market stipulates that sexual harassment and

Government reform, which will merge a large number of municipals. This has obviously led to increased competition for seats.

Consequently, the Minister for Gender Equality contacted the local party associations before the election and encouraged them to put more women on the ballots. At the same time, material providing good examples and offering advice to both party associations and women was distributed via for instance libraries. This meant that the number of women in local councils increased slightly, however, the percentage of female mayors still dropped from 9 % to 7 %. As a follow-up, gender equality checklists have been sent to the committees preparing the mergers of the local Governments.

threatened or abused persons receive information about preventive actions and the possibilities of receiving help.

Another target area is women's participation in public life - in politics and in management of companies, et cetera. To this end, the council has held several courses providing women with the tools to participate actively in political bodies, boards, etc. This work has been successful as 38 % of the current Greenland Parliament is women, while women make out 27 % of the members of the local councils. In Government, three out of eight members are women and four out of 13 managers in the Home Rule's central administration are women. We have five female mayors out of 18. Since 2003, the Home Rule Government has made an active effort to increase the number of women in the boardrooms of Home Rule-owned companies that are the largest in Greenland. Here 15 out of 87 members are women.

The level of misuse of women in the form of prostitution and trafficking in Greenland is considered as low. This is probably due to cultural factors and a consequence of the fact that Greenland – with our 57,000 inhabitants living in 72 towns/districts – is a small society.

Gender equality is a fundamental value in Greenland's social life and legislation. As I mentioned, parts of the legislation is similar to the Danish legislation. In 2003 the Greenlandic Act on Gender Equality was modernized.

Lastly, I will mention some initiatives in other fields of legislation which will promote gender equality.

Generally, the level of education in Greenland is lower than in Denmark, but the Home Rule has now launched a comprehensive scheme to improve educational levels. The primary and secondary school have been reformed, and we are also working on increasing the educational level among unskilled and unemployed persons. Hopefully, this will in the long run improve the social conditions. The educational system in Greenland is based on gender equality and these activities are aimed at both women and men. As a matter of fact, the women/men-ratio in high schools and at advanced studies/universities etc. is around 63 %/37 %.

In 2006 the Greenland Parliament improved the legislation on parental leave so that the parental leave now is at least 21 weeks after giving birth. Of this period the father can choose 6 weeks. The legislation stresses the joint responsibility for the child.

To get women to participate actively in public life and in the labour market, a satisfactory parental leave and satisfactory day-care offers in the form of day nurseries, kindergartens and school-based day-care facilities are essential. Greenland is doing well in this area and now around 85 % of the women are in the work force.

Greenland emphasises participating in international cooperation and providing information about our society to international forums. I do hope that these introductory remarks and the section on Greenland in the report will provide the committee with an impression of gender-equality work in Greenland.

Thank you for your attention.

Madam Chairperson

I would now like to give the floor to Ms Kitty May Ellefsen who is representing the Home Rule Government of the Faroe Islands.

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee

On behalf of the Faroese Home Rule Government I will first of all thank you as well as the Government of Denmark for this opportunity to give a short introduction to the section on gender equality in Faroe Islands.

Faroese legislation contains no formal impediment to gender equality. Legislation does not distinguish between women and men, but ensures that all citizens of the Faroes are assured the same rights without regard to gender. Women and men have the same rights and the same responsibilities in all areas of society.

The Faroese Parliament passed a law governing gender equality in 1994. The principal purpose of the law was to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on gender.

The legislation stipulates that the Gender Equality Commission may 1) invoke its prosecutorial powers to investigate a case of alleged violation of protected rights; 2) may recommend that those whose rights have been violated seek legal redress for compensation; and 3) may bring a civil action alleging activities or practices inconsistent with the intent of the law.

Current legislation regarding gender equality encompasses these areas:

- Employment practices,
- Parental leave,
- Education materials,
- Commissions and councils,
- Gender Equality Commission.

Women and men have the same political rights. Both women and men have the same right to vote and may be elected to the municipal councils, the Faroese Parliament, the Government executive and the Danish Parliament, which has two representatives from the Faroes. Nevertheless, women are the minority in those political arenas where public policy decisions are made.

There are currently a total of seven ministries in the Faroes. The senior administrator at the Prime Ministers Office is a woman, the other six senior administrators are men.

There are a total of 57 Governmental agencies or institutions. In eight of the institutions, women serve as the senior administrator, which is equal to 14 % of the total.

The Gender Equality Act stipulates that the number of women and men serving on public commissions and councils shall be equal. Since the law entered into effect, the Gender Equality Commission has worked diligently to ensure that the distribution of women and men on these public councils is in accordance with the provisions set forth in the law.

In 2000, there were 284 men and 112 women serving on public commissions and councils. This is equal to 72 % men and 28 % women. In 2003, there were 253 men and 164 women serving on public commissions and councils. This is equal to 61 % men and 39 % women.

Women and men are not equally represented in accordance with the law in the councils or committees under the various ministries. The Minister responsible for gender equality has notified the respective political authorities to take the necessary steps to ensure compliance with the provisions of the law regarding appointments to public commissions and councils.

Work is underway to ensure that gender mainstreaming is addressed in the drafting of laws and in the operational activities of the central Government administration as a whole.

Work has also focused on encouraging more women to enter political life. For the 2002 Parliamentary election, the Gender Equality Commission took a leading role in arranging a forum to encourage women to enter politics. The forum was successful in many ways: the number of women who were elected corresponds proportionately to the number of women represented on the ballot.

By the end of 2005 the Minister of Gender Equality appointed a committee with the assignment to encourage more women to participate in politics. The committee with its 10 members is manned with representatives from the political parties, The Gender Equality Commission, The Association of Faroese Municipal Authorities, The Union of Faroese Women and The Association of Municipal Authorities.

Thank you for your attention.

Madam Chairperson

For the Danish Government it is of crucial importance to ensure that Denmark acts in compliance with the international obligations. It follows that we welcome scrutiny and opportunities like this to discuss the implementation of the obligations enshrined in the convention.

I can assure you that the conclusions from the Committee will be disseminated and thoroughly discussed at our return, and the implementation of all the recommendations will be considered.

Finally, I would like to introduce the delegation;

Thank you for your attention.