



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

**CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

**CONSIDERATION OF THE FOURTH PERIODIC REPORT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF  
DELEGATION**

---

GENEVA, 24 OCTOBER 2008

Madam Chairperson,  
Distinguished members of the Committee,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to introduce the fourth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Republic of Slovenia, to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. On behalf of my delegation I wish to extend our sincere appreciation for the considerable efforts made to hold state parties accountable for the elimination of discrimination against women and the realisation of the right to gender equality by this distinguished forum over the past 26 years.

I would like to begin by introducing the members of the delegation. Our delegation comprises experts working with the government Office for Equal Opportunities, namely Ms Tanja Salecl, Secretary, Ms Jasna Jeram, Undersecretary, and Ms Vesna Božič, Advisor, and Ms Mojca Gruntar Činč, acting Director General of the Directorate for public health, Ministry of Health. The delegates are joined by Ambassador Andrej Logar, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, and his Deputy, Ms Eva Tomič. And finally, I am Majda Pučnik Rudl, Director of the government Office for Equal Opportunities.

\* \* \*

Madam Chair,

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia considers **the reporting process** established by the Convention and its substantiation developed by the Committee as a powerful mechanism in promoting and protecting the human rights of women and girls. This view is manifested in the guidelines for the preparation of national reports and implementation of similar activities with regard to international human rights treaties, which were for the first time adopted by the Slovenian Government in March 2005 and amended in December 2007. Their aim was to formalize the practice and to unify the process of preparation and presentation of our national reports and implementation of recommendations contained in the concluding observations.

Most of the Committee's recommendations to state parties on the reporting process expressed in the earlier guidelines on the form and content of national reports and in several concluding observations have been dully taken into account when our national guidelines were developed.

Since 2005, the participation of non-governmental organisations and women's associations in the preparation of the reports has been a standard. Draft reports are considered by the Intersectoral Human Rights Commission and then submitted for adoption to the Government. The ministry or government office responsible for the coordination of reporting under each international human rights treaty is obliged to secure a translation of the concluding comments and to prepare a proposal of concrete measures for the implementation of recommendations. They also determine the ministries and offices responsible for their realisation. The delegations are requested to prepare their report upon consideration of the national report by the treaty body and to complement it with draft decisions regarding the concluding observations and to submit them to the Government for approval.

The minimum requirements for the dissemination of national reports and concluding observations issued by the treaty bodies are also set out in the national guidelines. National reports and concluding observations must be made available on the web sites of the responsible ministry or government office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They have to be submitted to NGOs and other organisations, institutions and the media. The guidelines also encourage the use of various communication strategies to inform the general public and specific groups.

It should also be mentioned, that such a standardization of the national reporting process was mainly inspired by the practice of the Office for equal opportunities as a coordinator for reporting under the CEDAW convention. Actions taken by the Office and the Government with regard to the concluding observations, issued by the Committee in 2003 and the fourth periodic report, which is being considered today, are described in the report and responses to the list of issues and questions.

This year we celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the founding text of all major conventions on human rights. To mark this occasion and to generate better knowledge and understanding of state accountability for the implementation of human rights treaty provisions and of treaty body recommendations our Ministry of Foreign Affairs is going to publish a compilation of all reports of the Republic of Slovenia submitted under the human rights treaties and concluding observations issued by the relevant treaty bodies in our national language.

Although the involvement of our national parliament in the reporting procedure is not regulated by any formal procedure, all four reports submitted for consideration to this Committee have been presented to the relevant working body of the National Assembly. We regret that due to recent national elections the parliamentary working bodies have not been established yet and thus prevented my office from inviting a member of the parliamentary working body mandated with gender equality issues to join our national delegation.

\* \* \*

Madam Chair,

I would now like to highlight some of the positive impacts of our policies and approaches used during the last five years to accelerate and effectively implement our obligations and commitments to promote the full enjoyment of human rights by women and achieve gender equality in practice. In listing the positive developments I am going to refer both, to the efforts employed and the results achieved, including those of a more recent nature, and the remaining challenges, which need to be addressed by our future efforts.

First, let me highlight that the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action and its follow-up process have been our major legal and policy frameworks for designing, implementing and assessing the effects of measures and strategies to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and for formulating and delivering policies to promote gender equality.

---

In 2004, Slovenia ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention and, in 2006, the document on the adoption of the amendment of the first paragraph of article 20 of the Convention was deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Since the last consideration of the Slovenian report, we have made considerable **progress at the legislative and programmatic level.**

In June 2004, the Constitutional Act amending Article 43 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia laid the foundation for introducing measures for encouraging **de facto equality of women and men in standing for all elections.**

The Election of Slovenian members to the European Parliament Act introduced the requirement for at least 40-percent representation of either sex in the lists of candidates even before the said amendment to the Constitution had been adopted. In the absence of such a legislative special measure Slovenia would not have joined the family of those 5 EU member states, which have more than 40-percent of women among their members of the European Parliament, elected in 2004.

To comply with the constitutional obligation, so called quotas targeting the gender composition of the electoral lists of political parties or voters were introduced in the Local Elections Act in 2005, and in the following year also in the National Assembly Elections Act. These amended acts introduced gradualism with regard to the required minimum percentage of female and male candidates on electoral lists, meaning that the percentage will increase with each election until reaching the 40 percent of gender representation for local elections lists and 35 percent for parliamentary elections lists.

To avoid that the introduced gender quotas would be merely a symbolic expression of our determination to gender balanced participation of women and men in elected offices, rank-ordering rules, with exemption of the parliamentary elections act, and sanctions for non-compliance in the form of withdrawal of lists were legislated as well.

After the 2006 local elections in which the legislated gender quotas were applied for the first time, the share of elected female municipality councillors increased for 8 percent. Since for these elections only a 20-percent representation of men and women on the lists was required, the results proved that the measure used to redress the women's under-representation was an effective complementary policy tool.

Unfortunately, the introduction of legislated quotas fell short with our very recent National Assembly elections. While the share of women standing for elections was 35 percent, representing an increase of 11 percent in comparison to the previous elections, the increase in elected women has been only 1 percent. There may be various reasons why the introduction of quotas for elections to the parliament is not likely to be favourable to achieve a higher level of political representation of women. The main reason may be found in the partial incompatibility of legislated gender quotas with the electoral system in use. Although we are using a system of proportional representation, its features, such as multi-member electoral districts, and the formula determining how the winner of a seat is chosen, affect the possibility of introducing rank-ordering regulations and the very effectiveness of the legislated quotas. Obviously, obtaining a better understanding of the problem at hand and the contextual elements that impact on the representation of women remain our challenge in future efforts to increase the share of women in our parliament.

The Implementation of the Principle of Equal Treatment Act, a generic antidiscrimination law, adopted in 2004 and amended in 2007, complements the Equal Opportunities for Women

and Men Act, adopted in 2002. The former process of adoption of special measures to enhance realisation of de facto gender equality seemed not to be favourable to such initiatives, even where they might be identified as a necessary temporary positive differentiation measure to tackle persistent gender inequalities. In order to simplify the adoption of special measures the provisions regulating the manner of their adoption were replaced with a new provision.

Within the last five years significant steps were taken towards combating **violence against women**. While we were continuously building on previous work and accumulated knowledge as well as regionally and internationally shared experiences on best practices, including through additionally increasing availability of shelters, considerable actions were also taken to establish a more appropriate legal framework.

To effectively respond to violence against women, amendments to the current Penal Code were adopted, including a provision by which more severe punishment was introduced for criminal offences against sexual integrity. Moreover, the new Penal Code, which will come into force next week, defines domestic violence as a separate criminal offence.

More importantly, the Domestic Violence Prevention Act was adopted last February. The Act is the first to define domestic violence and to provide for comprehensive sets of measures aimed at prevention of family violence and ensuring safety, protection, support and assistance to victims. The act also provides for systematic inter-agency co-operation, professional education and training for all relevant professions and agencies and perpetrator re-socialisation.

Important steps ahead were also made in the legislation for protecting and assisting women victims of **trafficking in human beings** and exploitation of prostitution. To this end trafficking in human beings and abuse of prostitution were defined as criminal offences in the Penal Code, and the Witness Protection Act was adopted.

Within these positive trends in legislation two additional new acts deserve to be mentioned, in particular because they will contribute to the protection from **discrimination of women of various minority social groups**: the Registration of a Same Sex Partnership Act, regulating the relations and rights arising from such partnerships, and the Roma Community Act, which comprehensively regulates the position of Roma people in Slovenia and prescribes the adoption of a programme of measures for the harmonized exercising of the special rights of members of the Roma community.

\* \* \*

Madam Chair,

The presented dynamic setting of national legal standards to guarantee the enjoyment of human rights by women on the basis of gender equality was complemented with pro-active policy measures and various programmes and strategies, which are needed to ensure the full implementation of our national law and the obligations we undertook as a state party to CEDAW.

---

Successful development and implementation of the adopted policy measures and strategies require effective functioning of the **institutional mechanisms for gender equality**.

Over the past five years, considerable efforts have been made in strengthening the capacity of national mechanisms to promote gender equality and monitor the implementation of laws, policies and programmes. The reorganisation of the State Administration did not affect the status of the government Office for Equal Opportunities. The Office's human and financial resources, as well as its expertise, have been increasing and the mechanisms to support the application of gender mainstreaming in all policies and at all levels have been improved. Since 2003, equal opportunities co-ordinators and their alternates operate in all ministries, while at local level such co-ordinators were appointed in more than 20 municipalities.

Development of educational techniques and tools aimed at strengthening awareness-raising about gender equality and transferring knowledge on how to put gender mainstreaming into practice constitute one of the regular aspects of the Equal Opportunities Office's functioning.

With the support of national and international experts the Office organised a number of educational seminars and trainings for equal opportunities co-ordinators operating at national and local levels, public servants and decision-makers. Last year, the focus of raising awareness on the need for integration of gender perspective was on local authorities, while this year we are implementing a project aimed to improve governance for gender equality by establishing the sustainable and systematic implementation of gender mainstreaming at national level.

The main aim of our laws and institutional mechanisms and policies is to bring about concrete improvements and lasting results, indispensable for the realisation of de facto gender equality. The **National programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** for the period 2005 – 2013 has set clear objectives to be achieved within this eight-year period. The report on the implementation of the periodic plan 2006-2007 was considered and adopted by the Government and the Parliament this year. It confirmed that the implementation of the short term gender equality objectives becomes more realistic when ministries are made fully responsible for concrete gender equality activities in their own fields and when the associated expenditure is made explicit. The periodic plan for the next biannual period is based on the results achieved and insights developed through the assessment of the progress and shortcomings of the previous plan and with due consideration of the objectives of the national programme.

In addition to gender equality action plans, specific action plans, such as the three action plans for the fight against trafficking in human beings, which have been adopted by the Government since 2005, contributed to the achievement of the overall gender equality objectives, namely through a significant increase in law enforcement and victim assistance efforts.

\* \* \*

Yet, Madam Chair, the only evidence of the closing of the gap between de jure gender equality, adopted policies, strategies and actions plans on the one hand and de facto gender equality on the other are indicators, which capture the real situation of women's and men's daily lives. Let me therefore present you a few examples of the **de facto progress we have achieved** since the consideration of our previous reports by the Committee in 2003 and indicate the **remaining gender inequalities** which require our decisive future actions.

**Economic independence** has always been considered one of the most important values, both, by Slovenian women and men. In the evolution of the employment rate of women a positive

trend may be observed. In 2007, the highest rate was evidenced among women aged between 25 to 49 years – it stood at a rate of 85 percent and was only 5 percentage points lower than the employment rate of men. A similar trend could be evidenced with regard to women's unemployment rate which dropped for 1.5 percentage points between 2004 and 2007. As a result, the women's unemployment rate was only 1 percentage point higher than the total population unemployment, which in 2007 stood at 6.9 percent. The decrease in unemployment rate also resulted in a down-turn of long-term unemployed women.

The pay gap has narrowed by 3 points since 2002 and now stands at 7 percentage points.

However, we have to admit that employment strategies have proven to be more successful in terms of quantity than quality. Sectoral and occupational segregation of the labour market persist and the presence of female managers in companies has remained at 32 percent.

**Efforts to reconcile professional and private life** have resulted in an 8 percent higher employment rate of women with dependent children compared to the employment rate of women aged 25 to 49 years without children. A significant improvement attained through our efforts to achieve a better balance between working and private life is further manifested in the increasing share of working fathers who exercise their right to paid paternal leave.

In the field of **education**, women and girls have overall higher educational attainment than men. In Slovenia, the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years, which attained at least upper secondary school education, has been among the highest in the EU for several years. However, data show that the choice of study fields continues to be greatly segmented with a low presence of women in traditionally male dominated fields. We are aware that merely enrolling girls and women in education and training programmes is not enough. As education is an essential element of the empowerment of girls and women, we are going to focus our future efforts into encouraging them to pursue an education that will provide them with wider career choices and enable them to challenge traditional gender roles in society.

To pave the way towards more successful **elimination of gender stereotypes**, which remain one of the most persistent causes of inequality between women and men in all spheres and at all stages of life, the Slovenian European Union Presidency organised a Europe-wide conference entitled "Elimination of Gender Stereotypes – Mission (Im)Possible?" in the first half of 2008. The key messages from the conference are incorporated in the Conclusions of the Council of the European Union of 9 June 2008 on Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society. With their adoption Slovenia and the other EU member states agreed to reinforce the effective implementation and monitoring of our gender equality strategies and the promotion of specific actions designed to eliminate gender stereotyping in education and culture, training, vocational guidance, and on the labour market, as well as to develop initiatives for the advancement of the non-discriminatory portrayal of girls and women, and of boys and men in the media.

\* \* \*

---

Madam Chair,

The constructive dialogue is certainly going to provide more concrete information, clarifications and data to enable a verification of the extent to which our national

implementing measures and their results comply with the requirements under the Convention.  
We now welcome the commencing of a dialogue with the Committee's members.

Thank you for your attention.