

**PERMANENT MISSION OF DENMARK
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

Statement by
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Statement by Mrs Vibeke Abel, Deputy Permanent Secretary
On behalf of the Government of Denmark
On the occasion of the examination by the CEDAW on
July 22nd 2009

Madam Chair, distinguished members of the Committee on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

On behalf of the Danish Government, I am happy to present the most recent results of our work to promote the status of women, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in Denmark.

I look forward to a fruitful discussion and exchange of views with you, Madam Chair, and with the members of the Committee. I can assure you that we are eager to inform you of the follow-up on the recommendations from our last meeting in August 2006, and to engage in a constructive dialogue on measures and policies regarding gender equality and the advancement of women.

Furthermore, I have the pleasure to inform you that we have included representatives from the self-governing and autonomous territories within the Kingdom of Denmark - Greenland and the Faroe Islands. They will address the process of implementing the Convention in these regions and answer questions put forward by the Committee.

Let me just briefly introduce you to the concept of self-government.

When an area of jurisdiction is governed by the Greenlandic or Faroese authorities, legislative and administrative power in this area rests solely with the Government in question.

Both the Greenlandic and the Faroese Governments have assumed responsibility with respect to gender equality and thus have full legislative and administrative power in these affairs.

Madame Chair

I would now like to make a statement on the current status of the implementation of the Convention in Denmark. Since we have reported on many of the most urgent issues in our report and the follow-up response to the Committee's questions, the statement will be brief and focus on the most current initiatives and results. This I hope will leave time for the Committee to pose questions and for us to answer them.

Gender equality is a fundamental right in Denmark, and it applies to everyone.

We believe that gender equality is a key value in a free democracy and a prerequisite for a sustainable, democratic society – the very basis for economic growth.

The Danish Government is committed to ensuring full implementation of all articles of the Convention.

To ensure coordinated and comprehensive strategy and committed policies across sectors, we have established strong institutional mechanisms, including a Minister for Gender Equality and a complaints board in addition to independent organisations with national funding and research institutions.

The Minister for Gender Equality has recently been transferred from the Ministry of Welfare to the Ministry of Employment. This will not change the work of the department of gender equality but rather provide the Minister for Gender Equality with a good opportunity to work even harder on important issues like the gender pay gap and a gender segregated labour market.

Madame Chair

In relation to Part I of the Convention, all relevant laws are assessed in a gender perspective before being adopted. Also, targeted policy measures are implemented to ensure that not only do women enjoy *de jure* equality but also *de facto* equality.

The Act on gender equality is continuously revised. The latest amendment was passed in May this year. The Government took the initiative to strengthen the provisions on the gender composition on boards and committees appointed by ministers. If an organisation does not propose both a man and a woman for a committee seat, the minister is compelled to leave that seat empty. Currently 41 % of the seats are held by women.

Danish society is characterised as a fairly equal society, where men and women in general are equally active on the labour market, the educational level is high for both sexes, we have long and flexible parental leave schemes, a fertility rate of 1.9 and guaranteed daycare for all children. This does not, however, mean that we will not continue to ensure further

progress. On the contrary we wish to underline our commitment and obligation to stay at the forefront.

The Government is aware that de facto equality is not yet ensured in all areas of life, since women face challenges like a gender pay gap, an unequal balance in top management positions, domestic violence, trafficking, and so on.

A lot of work has been done, and we still have a lot of work ahead of us.

Policy measures are constantly being developed to deal with these challenges in order to achieve gender equality. The Danish Government wishes to ensure that all citizens – women as well as men (regardless of ethnic origin) – are able to utilise their competences fully, for the benefit of the individual as well as for society.

Gender equality is regarded a basic human right and the basis for democracy. Also, women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are considered fundamental for the enjoyment of their human rights.

And, Madame Chair, the Convention is a relevant source of law in Denmark and has been invoked before the Danish Supreme Court. Therefore, the Convention is known among lawyers and judges in Denmark.

Madame Chair

The right to a free choice of education, career, family life and when or if to have children are important values in Danish society.

To this end, Denmark has placed special focus on gender roles amongst children and young people. We believe that early efforts to address traditional gender roles can bring about less stereotype choices of education, employment and family patterns and hence promote the advancement of women and a more equal society.

Moreover we have focused on the fact that stereotype gender roles can be a constraint for boys and men, as is the case for women and girls. In order to ensure gender equality we need to involve both women and men, girls and boys.

The overall objective of these efforts is to give children and young people free and equal opportunities, and make them able to choose a path in life without being limited by traditional gender roles or expectations.

In order to achieve this objective, a range of initiatives and debates have been launched in schools and kindergartens.

Let me give you one example: A project on ways to get girls and boys in kindergartens to play and learn about gender roles has been launched. The project involves an inspiration guide for kindergarten teachers and a children's book.

The guide and the children's book have been distributed to every kindergarten in the country and to organisations, professionals and others working with young children. The children's book has been very well received in the kindergartens.

Madame Chair

As part of the Government's dual strategy both special measures and gender mainstreaming are part of the overall gender equality work in Denmark.

In Denmark, gender mainstreaming is embedded in the law with the Act on gender equality.

The practical implementation of gender mainstreaming is at times felt as a lengthy process, but looking now at what we have achieved during the years, we have actually accomplished some very good results.

Ministries have launched a plan on how to develop skills in gender mainstreaming, and they train employees to make use of these skills. This building up of competences is well under way. To assist the process, an individual e-learning program and four operational tools have been developed.

The management level is included in the work through an inter-ministerial steering committee; contact persons in different ministries have established gender mainstreaming networks. The members of the steering committee are responsible for the work in their respective ministries, and for the implementation of the cross-ministerial action plan on gender mainstreaming

The gender equality work in the ministries has shifted from a single focus on human resource management to a focus on policies. This is a major achievement and has so far resulted in the formulation by each ministry of gender equality policies, and in the formulation of fifteen (15) cross-cutting gender equality goals that all together form the overall policy of the Government.

Madame Chair

At our last meeting the distinguished members expressed interest in the situation of female prostitutes in Denmark. For this reason I would like briefly to present the current status.

In 2005, the Danish Government launched a comprehensive and large-scale initiative aimed at offering prostitutes in Denmark the opportunity to choose “a different life”. A Competence Centre against Prostitution was established. The aim is to limit prostitution and to reduce social, mental and physical consequences.

The initiative includes, among other things, massive outreach work, telephone counselling, psychological help, supplementary training of staff working with young people at risk of choosing to live as prostitutes, and advice and guidance at local-authority level.

Finally, funds have been earmarked for creating coherent knowledge in the field and current trends in the prostitution environment.

An evaluation of the work in 2008 shows that presently prostitutes feel more comforted now knowing that help is available if needed.

It is difficult to assess the number of individuals who have actually given up prostitution on account of the work done by the Competence Centre against Prostitution. The way out of prostitution often is very long with several drawbacks. However, we do believe that an effect can be established.

The issue of prostitution also contains the phenomenon of trafficking, which is a highly prioritised area for the Government.

In Denmark, the main form of trafficking is still trafficking in women for sexual exploitation.

Human trafficking has always been and is still completely unacceptable. The Government is devoted to eliminating this modern form of slavery.

Following the second national action plan to combat all forms of human trafficking, the number of women identified as trafficked and the number of women who have been offered support is growing

At the same time the Danes' knowledge of human trafficking is now very high.

In a survey recently made, 93% said that they were familiar with the phenomenon of trafficking of women for sexual exploitation.

About two-thirds (2/3) said that they would immediately contact the police if they came across human trafficking.

These are positive results showing that the action plan and all the work related to this have an effect on the population's knowledge of trafficking.

The main purpose of the Government's work is of course to protect victims of trafficking, to prevent trafficking and to punish the traffickers. The police are working actively in all parts of the country to bring the traffickers to justice.

As part of the implementation of the current action plan an Anti-trafficking Centre was established during 2007. The main objectives of the Centre are:

- to coordinate collaboration between social organisations and other public authorities
- to improve the social assistance offered to victims of human trafficking, including a prepared return
- to collect and convey knowledge in the field of human trafficking

All actors involved in this field are constantly being trained to understand the background, culture and conditions these women are living under in order to improve the dialogue with them. The aim is of course to provide proper protection and support to the victims, while bringing the traffickers to justice.

Madam Chair

In addressing articles 7 and 8 of the Convention, I would like to focus briefly on our efforts to achieve a better gender balance in local government.

This was discussed at our last meeting in 2006, and we have not had a local government election since. The next elections are in November 2009. And to encourage more women to engage in local politics – and the local parties to take initiatives to get more women into politics, the Minister for Gender equality has distributed a pamphlet with good advice and examples of good practice to the local branches of all political parties. More women in local government were also the theme of a big conference held by the minister on 8th March this year.

The effect of these initiatives will show in November.

And Madame Chair, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have taken several initiatives to promote women in top-level management. In the latest nomination round for ambassadors 43% of the newly appointed ambassadors were women.

Madame Chair

The educational system plays a crucial role in terms of developing knowledge and understanding of democracy.

It is also at school that many children first meet children with different social and cultural norms and values. In the encounter with others, children learn that life may be understood in many ways, but that democracy and gender equality is a precondition for a just society and for cross-cultural dialogue.

As a source of inspiration in this connection, the Government has published the teaching material: “Learning democracy”. This material is meant to provide inspiration for ways to make pupils become conscious of democracy, gender equality and democratic values.

In Denmark, as in many other countries, more girls than boys get a high-level education. However, regarding high positions at the universities, we still have a long way to go.

To promote gender equality at the universities, a range of activities have been initiated.

One example is that Denmark's biggest university – University of Copenhagen – has managed to increase the number of female professors by introducing special measures. In 2007 women comprised 15 % of all newly appointed professors; in 2008 this number had increased to 28 %. The use of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between men and women in this area has thus proved how important it is to supplement legislation and policy measures.

The University of Southern Denmark has hired a consultant on gender equality. Her job is to launch a mentor programme to help young female researchers. Besides that, her job is to suggest how the university can promote female research talents and women with management potential.

Another visible result has been that the overall number of female professors has now risen to 13 % compared with 11.8 % when the seventh periodic report was published. Also, within Natural Sciences there has been a remarkable increase of female students from 1994-2006. In 1994 one third of the students were women. In 2006 almost half of the students were women.

This shows that the hard work to get more girls to choose natural sciences has been fruitful.

The Government is very pleased that the effort to promote gender equality in academia now seems to be fruitful, even though there still is a long way to go.

Madame Chair

Economic independence is one of the most important preconditions for achieving gender equality in society. Therefore, the Danish Government is deeply concerned about securing equal opportunities for men and women on the labour market.

The employment rate for women in Denmark is one of the highest in the world. It means that nearly all women in Denmark have paid work and therefore are able support themselves financially. However, migrant women have not yet reached quite the same level.

This employment rate has an enormous impact on Danish society. Unfortunately, however, the labour market is still gender segregated, and pay differentials between men and women persist.

We need more knowledge about the connection between a very high employment rate and pay differentials between women and men and the gender-segregated labour market. We want to obtain this knowledge in order to get new tools to reduce the pay gap.

We have already taken a number of steps to rectify the situation.

For instance, from 1 January 2007 major enterprises, both public and private, are required to prepare gender-divided wage statistics. The statistics will indicate whether companies have equal pay for men and women. The result is to be analysed at the end of 2009.

We are aware of the important role companies must play when gender equality is to be promoted on the labour market. Therefore, we have produced inspiration material for companies, and we constantly try to develop new initiatives.

The gender-segregated labour market, which is the main cause of the pay differences, is a special challenge both in the educational system and on the labour market. The situation is improving, but only very slowly. Not least in top management positions.

Madame Chair

The Government is aware that even though many initiatives have been taken the last couple of years, we have not yet been able to achieve an equal balance in management. We have now decided to focus on one main initiative. To promote more women in top management, the Government has launched a Charter on women in management, hence changing the work from focusing on best practice to a more binding strategy.

We believe it is of crucial importance to cooperate with the public and the private sector, and we know that we have a mutual interest, as it is an economic advantage for companies to have women in top management. It pays off to have women in top positions - the bottom line will testify to that.

By signing the Charter, companies commit themselves to developing strategies and set goals that are ambitious but realistic at company level. Members of the Charter will be assessed on their achievements.

The Charter was launched in March 2008. The goal is to have 100 enterprises sign the Charter by the end of 2010. So far, 70 enterprises have signed up. Among them are some of the most well-known and respected Danish enterprises including ISS, LEGO, Grundfoss, SAS and most of the Government ministries.

Madame Chair

In general the Danish Government does not believe in quotas but in binding commitments. This is also the case when it comes to women on boards in private companies.

Only 10 % of the members on boards in listed companies (19 % in unlisted) are women, which is a waste of human resources. Therefore the Minister for Economic and Business Affairs asked the Committee on Corporate Governance to consider how to address the problem. The Committee now recommends that when assessing its composition, private boards should take into consideration diversity with a special focus on gender and age. Listed companies have to comply to or to explain if they have not followed the recommendations.

Madame Chair

Violence against women is a violation of the Danish Criminal Code. In addition, the Government regards violence against women as a reflection of a lack of equality and respect between women and men.

In order to combat domestic violence against women, the government has made two action plans in the period of 2002-2008.

The first action plan contributed to supporting victims and to breaking the taboo surrounding domestic violence against women. The second action plan launched initiatives to support the victims, target activities at the perpetrator and target activities at the professionals along with dissemination of knowledge and information.

The comprehensive effort has brought along a positive effect. In 2001 approximately 42,000 women experienced partner violence and this figure had fallen to 28,000 by 2005.

But when this is said, 28,000 women experiencing violence from a current or former partner is of course still far too many! Not to forget the

22,000 children who grow up in families affected by domestic violence.

Therefore the good efforts must and will continue. The Government and the parties to the adjustment pool agreement have chosen to allocate funds to launch a new National Strategy to Combat Violence in Close Relationships 2009–2012, in order to continue the targeted effort against domestic violence. The strategy will contain two crosscutting themes, namely embedment of the best of the previous efforts and prevention.

As in the previous action plans a special focus will be placed on migrant women. This group is extra vulnerable and some of these women are not aware of their rights and the possibilities for help and support they are entitled to in Denmark. For this reason special initiatives as well as targeted information is being developed for this group of victims of domestic violence. Besides other forms of violence like violence in the name of honour and forced marriages are being dealt with through a range of initiatives.

Madame Chair

At our previous meeting, the Committee placed emphasis on the issue of residence permit for women with an ethnic minority background, including women victims of domestic violence.

According the Danish Aliens Act, the Danish immigration authorities can revoke or refuse to extend a time-limited residence permit, if the basis for the permit is no longer valid.

If the residence permit has been granted on the basis of marriage or cohabitation, and this basis is no longer present, the authorities must pay special attention as to whether the marriage or co-habitation has ended as a consequence of the alien having been exposed to violence. This is specifically laid down in the law.

The Danish immigration authorities follow this particular area very closely and have a current focus on any need of adjustment.

Madame Chair

Before concluding, I would like to take the opportunity to share with you information on Denmark's development cooperation, which illustrates

and underlines the importance attached to gender equality by the Danish Government.

The Danish government maintains gender equality as a top priority and that is in an all-comprising concept.

In development cooperation, gender equality and empowerment of women is mainstreamed in all Danish supported development activities, and in the development approach. Focus is on improving women's access to rights, resources and influences.

Within the UN, Denmark is at the forefront in promoting the establishment of a new gender entity, that will be a driver for strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment.

And equally important: Denmark has initiated the "MDG3 Global Call to Action", an international campaign on Millennium Development Goal number 3 to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

We are convinced that gender equality is a key to accelerating progress. MDG3 is a goal in itself but also a means to achieve all the other development goals.

The overall objectives of the campaign are to:

- increase political priorities, to place gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre stage for development, internationally and at national level, and
- increase resource allocations, to achieve a doubling of ODA and substantial increase of Governments' national resource allocation for gender GEWE by 2010.

As part of this global initiative, more than 100 torches are travelling around the world, generating and implementing commitments to "doing something extra" for gender equality - for women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, for women's rights in general, and for women's economic opportunities.

Many governments, international organisations, private sector, civil society and prominent individuals have joined the campaign, and the current crisis makes it all the more important to ensure that women will not be the first victims.

Denmark will also follow up on the commitments, and in September a mid-term status of the implementation will be published.

For its part, the Government has doubled its financial support to gender equality and empowerment of women from 2008 through 2010 and has furthermore allocated substantial financial resources to promoting the economic empowerment of women in Liberia, a fragile state in transition after a devastating civil war.

This leads me to highlight another political priority in our development cooperation, namely the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Denmark was the first country to formulate an action plan for implementing of SCR 1325, a plan that has just been revised. The plan has been formulated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the National Police in an all-of-Government approach and in close cooperation with civil society - NGOs, researchers and other relevant actors.

The new plan of action is based on experiences, and emphasises the focus on women's active participation in peace negotiations and conflict resolutions, active participation of civil society and civil-military co-planning.

The purpose of civil-military co-planning is to bridge security and development by laying the foundation for the longer-term development assistance, maintaining a special focus on strengthening women empowerment and women's rights.

Madam Chair

In conclusion, I would like to stress that on behalf of the Danish Government, I can assure you that Denmark is committed fully to implementing the Convention as well as your recommendations and conclusions.

We greatly appreciate your valuable contributions to the process of evaluating our work on gender equality.

And, with your permission, Madam Chair, I would now like to give the floor to the representative of Greenland followed by the Faroe Islands.

Thank you

Speech by Mr. Torben Weyhe, Head of Section
On behalf of the Government of Greenland
on the occasion of the examination by the CEDAW July 22nd 2009

Mrs. Chair, Distinguished member of the Committee to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

On behalf of the Government of Greenland (Naalakkersuisut) I would like to thank you for the opportunity to report on the status and development of gender equality in Greenland.

21 June 2009 the Greenlandic people celebrated that the Act on Self-Governance entered into force. The act constitutes that Greenland can take over further responsibility areas from the Danish state at a pace, which Greenland finds beneficial and proper. The people of Greenland are acknowledged as a people pursuant to international law with the right of self-determination and Greenlandic is now the official language in Greenland. The Act on Self-Governance also opens the opportunity for Greenland to become an independent nation in the future.

The Self-Governance Arrangement will not influence the area of gender equality formally, since this area has been under the competence of the Greenland Home Rule Government. However, the right to extended self-determination includes increased responsibility, politically speaking. If Greenland is to achieve independence in the future, both women and men must contribute equally and benefit equally in the process.

The Government of Greenland supports this point of view and has underlined its position in the recently held parliamentary election 2 June 2009. The party Inuit Ataqatigiit - which is by far the biggest party in the new government coalition - nominated an equal amount of woman and men for the election and has selected four women as ministers. This means that the new

Government of Greenland consists of four women and five men. The premier of Greenland, Kuupik Kleist, emphasized the strength of having both sexes represented equally as he presented the new government.

14 June 2008 the Government of Greenland nominated a new Gender Equality Council, which consists of four women and three men. The new council wants to reinforce the gender equality debate in Greenland through television campaigns and internet forums. Furthermore, the council is aiming to place gender equality ambassadors in all Greenlandic towns. The purpose is to raise gender equality themes through public debates, school visits etc. A specific focus area for the new council will be combating violence against women.

At the ministerial level there are also ongoing initiatives to fight violence against women. In fall 2009 there will be a national conference on domestic violence with special reference to battered wives refuges. It is an ambition for the new government that all towns in Greenland should have battered wives refuges and that these must be developed professionally. To support the effort, the Ministry of Social Affairs has set up a working group consisting of specialist and organizations to address the issue of violence against women.

In the past years The Government of Greenland has ordered a number of surveys to learn more about the social conditions of the Greenlandic population. These surveys have shown that especially young mothers experience social problems. As a consequence The Government has implemented a special program for young mothers with the purpose to provide financial help as well as guidance and special housing.

On the preventive level The Government has also initiated a special program. The program implies that primary schools teach both girls and boys about the possible consequences of being parents in a very young age – for example through the use of Real Care-dolls.

In 2006 the Greenland Government improved the legislation on parental leave thus the parental leave today is 32 weeks. Of this period the first 15 weeks are given to the mother, while the last 17 weeks can be divided freely between the parents. The legislation stresses the joint responsibility for the child.

In public administration women have moved forward in most areas in recent years. The obvious explanation would be that more women than men get a higher education today. But also the increasing debate on gender equality – mainly motivated by female politicians and leaders - could be a significant factor.

In the Act on Gender Equality 2003 it is stated that gender equality strategies must be implemented in all business organizations and plans where relevant. Employers that treat women and men unequal can be sentenced to pay up to 39 weeks of wages.

In the past year Greenland has given a higher priority to the co-operation between the Nordic countries by participating in the Nordic Executive Committee on Gender Equality. The objective of this involvement is to gain inspiration and knowledge about gender equality from our neighbors. Another benefit is that Greenland is given the opportunity to take part in projects which could not be arranged and funded by Greenland alone. Thus, the involvement in the co-operation between the Nordic countries is a valuable way of lifting up the gender equality area in Greenland.

These were the introductory remarks. I hope this speech together with the section on Greenland in the report has given you an impression on the status and development of gender equality in Greenland.

On behalf of the Government of Greenland I will thank you for your contributions to improve the area of gender equality in Greenland. I can assure you that we are fully committed to take any recommendation we may receive from the committee into serious consideration.

Thank you for your attention.

Statement by Mr. Pól E. Egholm, Special Adviser
On behalf of the Government of the Faroes on the occasion of the
examination by the CEDAW on July 22nd 2009

Honourable Madam Chair, Distinguished Members of the Committee

On behalf of the Government of the Faroes, I would like to express my gratitude for this opportunity to present to the Committee the ways in which the Government of the Faroes translates the rights and obligations in the Convention into specific legislation and initiatives.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Faroes and Faroese society, let me start by stating that gender equality and women's rights are perceived as fundamental values on the Faroes and that work on gender equality is an area of high priority for the Government of the Faroes.

Madam Chair,

Let me also reiterate that the Government of the Faroes has assumed both legislative and administrative responsibility over matters pertaining to gender equality, and is therefore obligated to ensure that all rights expressed in the convention and the optional protocol are fulfilled.

The Faroese Act on Gender Equality ensures that women and men enjoy the same civil, political, economic and cultural rights on the Faroes. The legislation provides for the Gender Equality Commission as the principle institution to ensure that the Act on Gender Equality is upheld. However, reference is made to the sixth and seventh CEDAW report for a further description of the Act and the Committee.

Madam Chair,

The Government of the Faroes is of the opinion that there has been significant progress in recent years to achieve de jure and de facto equality on the Faroes.

For example, the Faroese Parliament has made amendments to the legislation concerning parental leave and compensation, which increased the period for receiving the exclusive paternity pay from 2 to 4, the maternity pay period remains unchanged at 14 weeks, but the joint parental pay period – which parents can freely distribute amongst themselves – was extended from 10 to 16 weeks.

Changes have also been made to Faroese legislation concerning housing and social security - with the effect of furthering gender equality either directly or indirectly.

In the envisioned pension reform coverage will be extended to groups of persons with out previous affiliation to the labour market such as housewives and entrepreneurs. These measures should hopefully reduce a housewife's financial dependency on her spouse, as well as encourage female entrepreneurs to venture into business on their own with fewer worries about the effect on their old age pensions.

Madam Chair,

I am pleased to be able to report to the Committee some of the tangible positive effects that the participation in the CEDAW reporting process has had on Faroese society. This is the second time that the Faroes have been represented at a CEDAW examination, and it should please the Committee to know, that one of the many results of the Committee's recommendations after the last examination was to fuel an immense public debate on the Faroes on the issue of gender equality in politics.

In its concluding comments the Committee expressed concern at the low level of participation of women in political decision-making on the Faroes. These comments received extensive attention in the Faroese media and general public which contributed to the general sense of urgency of addressing the issue.

I am especially pleased to be able to report that many of the initiatives implemented on the basis of these recommendations have been successful – yet, we acknowledge that there is still a long way before we have equality in political representation.

Madam Chair,

In 2005 the Faroese Government established an independent committee, *Demokratia*, which has been very successful in encouraging women to participate in politics. *Demokratia* has actively sought to raise awareness of gender equality by organizing public events and debates as well as to attract media coverage to the issue of gender equality. Furthermore, *Demokratia* has been in close cooperation with the Gender Equality Commission and active in their communication with the political system as well as with the general public.

Furthermore, prior to the 2008 election the Faroese parliament passed changes to the legislation concerning the number of electoral constituencies making the Faroes a single electoral constituency instead of the previous seven. These changes resulted in increasing the relative weight of the voters in the metropolitan area – who are more prone to vote for women – and may have contributed to the observed increase in female representation in the Faroese parliament.

A measurable result of these initiatives can be seen in the outcome of the general elections in January 2008 where the share of women in the Faroese Parliament increased from 9.4% to 21.2%. Furthermore, the share of women in the Faroese Government increased from 0% to 37.5%. Since the report was handed in this share has, however, gone down to 33% as a new ministry was formed with a male minister.

Also, the November 2008 municipal election showed a clear improvement – this time at the local level – which can be traced both in relation to the

number of women on the ballots going up from 32% to 39 % as well as women's share of the seats on municipal councils which went up from 23% to 31%.

Thus, the results of the general and municipal elections as well as the public debate clearly indicate that there is a change in attitude on the Faroes with respect to the importance of gender equality in political and public forums.

The Government of the Faroes welcomes the scrutiny and advice of the Distinguished Members of the Committee and will give due consideration to any recommendation it may receive.

Thank you for your attention.