

The Committee welcomed, *inter alia*: that the Convention takes precedence over domestic legislation; the establishment of the Co-ordinating Committee for the Problems of Women and the Gender Centre; preparation of a national action plan to implement the Beijing Platform for Action; and the general standard of women's health and education. Factors hindering the implementation of the Convention were noted as including: a difficult transition to a democracy; the absence of gender-sensitive policies and measures to counteract negative effects of this transition; and the overemphasis on legislative protection and cultural promotion of motherhood and family roles for women, rather than focussing on women as individuals in their own right.

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee included, *inter alia*: the misinterpretation of affirmative action and temporary special measures as protective rather than pro-active measures; the high rate of domestic violence against women, including murder in the home; absence of a provision allowing charges to be brought by the police against an abuser, independent of the victim; that securing a conviction often requires the corroboration of independent witnesses; the lack of emergency or protective shelters available to victims of domestic violence; and the lack of information on the actual situation regarding trafficking in women.

The Committee expressed concern over: the establishment of, and increase in, "household management schools" which cater to female students and train them for traditional roles, thus promoting gender stereotyping; the highly segregated labour market, which is accompanied by low pay for women; the fact that job descriptions that link "physically demanding" elements of work to male physical strength and to higher pay for men may be based on a one-sided understanding of those elements and underestimate other physically demanding elements found in women's work; the fact that women are faced with the dilemma of choosing between work and raising a family, in part because there are no social services available for women with children under the age of two years; and the detrimental effect of the decrease in pre-school childcare on women's employment opportunities and, over the longer term, employment status, pay and promotion. Concern was also raised in relation to the high rate of abortions and the use of abortion as a form of family planning, and the absence of development programmes for rural women to assist them in obtaining the skills and resources necessary to become competitive in the labour market.

The Committee recommended that the government, *inter alia*:

- ♦ reconsider its position on temporary special measures, provide such measures and establish timetables to ensure women's increased presence in political parties, as well as in all sectors, segments and at all levels of employment;
- ♦ provide in the next report detailed information on the status and function of the Co-ordinating Committee

for the Problems of Women, its programmes and their impact; secure sufficient funds for the Co-ordinating Committee; reconsider the name of the Co-ordinating Committee in order to reflect the view that "women's problems", as they are currently understood in Slovakia, are in fact challenges faced by society and require a change to the current theoretical framework of dealing with them;

- ♦ implement procedures to permit prosecution of violence against women independent of victim testimony and omitting the requirement that the complainant's evidence be corroborated; establish crisis centre hotlines and victim support centres equipped with medical, psychological and emotional support; and, in order to raise public awareness, disseminate information through the media on this issue;
- ♦ take all necessary measures to monitor and eradicate trafficking in women in Slovakia, including the sensitization of police, border officials and NGOs working in this area; continue cooperative efforts with border states to eliminate trafficking across national borders; provide detailed information on the number of women who have been trafficked into Slovakia and those returned to their country of origin, as well as statistics on the number of individuals arrested, prosecuted and sentenced as a result of their involvement in trafficking;
- ♦ encourage the participation of women's NGOs in the drafting of national policy and in following up its implementation; take note of the importance of NGOs in increasing public awareness and countering traditional stereotypes of women;
- ♦ provide information in the next report on the purpose and composition of "household management schools" as well as how the curricula differ from those in other schools;
- ♦ avail itself of the existing body of research and practice on equal pay for work of equal and comparable value in order to overcome pay inequity; use temporary special measures to break through the sex segregation of the labour market;
- ♦ provide options to women who have children and choose to work, including establishment of, and access to, adequate public day-care facilities; fund and support pre-school child-care centres at both the local and national levels to ensure women the opportunity to work;
- ♦ increase family planning education and access to affordable and safe contraception in order to reduce the number of abortions; and
- ♦ provide information on the measures undertaken to empower rural women and to encourage economic self-sufficiency; collate and make available statistical information pertaining to the social, economic and political status of minority women with a view to developing specific policies to respond to the needs of