

The Committee also noted the government's oral commitment to consider suggestions related to: the need for measures to eliminate stereotypes that restrict women's role to that of mothers and caregivers and improve the participation of women in political life; the appointment of a deputy ombudsperson to deal specifically with women's rights; the need to improve public awareness about the Convention so that it may be used more frequently throughout the judicial system; the possibility of instituting a system of restraining orders, in particular to protect women subjected to domestic violence; the need to commence a dialogue and to coordinate efforts with trade unions on measures to protect women in the area of employment, in particular with respect to illegal pressuring of women by employers in relation to pregnancy within a certain period after the commencement of employment; the need for increased assistance to family members, in particular women, taking care of the elderly; and the need to collect more detailed information on the situation of rural women. The Committee viewed positively: the existence of programmes to assist women with special needs; the measures implemented to eradicate gender stereotypes within the education system; the introduction of measures to introduce human rights education into schools; and the state of the health-care system and the government's clear commitment to universal coverage.

Factors hindering the implementation of the Convention were acknowledged, related to: significant economic and social difficulties as a consequence of the armed conflict, including the presence of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons; the transition to a market economy and a democratic political structure; and the absence of gender-sensitive policies and measures to counteract the negative effects of the transition.

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee included, *inter alia*: the view expressed in the government's report that women themselves bear full responsibility for their low level of participation in public life, suggesting a lack of understanding of indirect and structural discrimination and its impact on women; the consistent emphasis placed on women's roles as mothers and caregivers in Croatian legislation pertaining to a number of areas, noting that giving priority to that aspect of women's lives tends to limit women's full participation in society; the need for gender-sensitive analysis of the emphasis on motherhood vis-à-vis women's roles in the public sphere to assure *de facto* gender equality in the society of the future; the lack of data in some areas, in particular the minimal attention paid to the issue of women living in poverty and the absence of sex-disaggregated data on that topic; the lack of sex-disaggregated data on HIV/AIDS; the lack of reliable data on teenage pregnancy; the lack of statistical information on the social, economic and political standing of minority women; and the government's view that there is no need to specify gender inequality every time the issue of equality is raised, noting that, in order to increase the vis-

ibility of gender issues and to promote a gender-sensitive national agenda, it is crucial to incorporate gender in all discussions of equality.

The Committee expressed concern over: inadequacies in measures to encourage women victims of domestic violence to come forward with complaints; failure to incorporate into the law on domestic violence prosecution by public attorneys *ex officio* or upon the complaint of third parties; evidence indicating that church-related organizations adversely influence policies concerning women and thereby impede full implementation of the Convention; the fact that services pertaining to women's reproductive health are the first to be affected as a result of the government's financial constraints; and information indicating that some hospitals have refused to provide abortions on the basis of conscientious objection of doctors.

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

- ♦ continue to implement and strengthen measures to empower women and to mainstream gender issues;
- ♦ establish specific affirmative actions targeted to numerical goals and quotas, in particular in such areas as political and decision-making positions in public life;
- ♦ take further measures to promote recognition of the variety of roles that women play in society, noting that it is crucial to educate the public with regard to the importance of an equitable distribution between women and men of family roles and "caring responsibilities";
- ♦ include, in the next report, additional data on the status of women involved in prostitution and detailed information on the problem of trafficking in women, in particular migrant women, and the measures taken to implement legislation in this area;
- ♦ collect 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 different groups;
- ♦ provide, in future reports, more information about the situation of women with disabilities;
- ♦ take steps to secure the realization by women of their reproductive rights by, *inter alia*, guaranteeing them access to abortion services in public hospitals; examine fully the implications for women, in particular, of funding cuts for contraceptives and implement strategies to address any detrimental impact on women; and
- ♦ take the necessary steps to incorporate the participation of NGOs in the preparation of the next report to the Committee.