

# News & Media

COMMITTEE ON ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN: GREECE, ANGOLA AND FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA  
18 February 2013

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women this afternoon met with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to discuss the situation of the rights of women in Greece, Angola and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The reports of the three countries will be reviewed by the Committee this week, together with the report of Cyprus.

An NGO representative said the principal problem in Greece was that although the country had a good legislative framework, the protection of rights in practice was lacking. The absence of effective free legal aid was a major obstacle for the victims of trafficking in persons, domestic violence, rape and other forms of sexual violence. Other issues of concern included under-representation and absence of minority Roma or Muslim women in post-primary education, marriage of girls under the age of 18, anti-smoking legislation, traditional patriarchal attitudes and gender-role stereotyping.

The speaker from Angola outlined key concerns for women's rights in the country, which included follow up of the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, access to education for young girls, access to justice for young women in rural areas, maternal and child health care, and the domestic violence law.

Speakers from NGOs said that in recent years the discrepancy between declarative intentions in the adopted legislation and the factual status of women in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had increased. Of particular concern were the situation in the area of tradition and family upbringing, violence against women, employment, health care and the situation of rural women. The situation of Romani women in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had not changed since the last examination of this State in 2006, and the responsible State institutions had not implemented concrete measures directed at Romani women and girls within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the two National Action Plans for Promoting the Status of Romani Women of 2008 and 2011.

Speaking during the discussion were representatives from Greek Helsinki Monitor, Open Society Foundation Angola and Network of Women in Action, Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women and Roma Center Skopje.

The next public meeting of the Committee will be on Tuesday, 19 February at 10 a.m., when it will begin its consideration of the seventh periodic report of Greece ([CEDAW/C/GRC/7](#)). The reports of Angola and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be reviewed on Wednesday, 20 February and Thursday, 21 February respectively.

## **Statements by Non-Governmental Organizations**

## **Greece**

A speaker for Greek Helsinki Monitor, said that the country had a good legislative framework but the problem was the protection of rights in practice. The legislation on trafficking in persons of 2002 was considered satisfactory, but the State did not keep official statistics on the eventual prosecution of perpetrators; a very small number of them ended up serving long-term prison sentences as provided by the law. One reason for this effective impunity was that victims were not provided with free legal aid and had to rely on non-governmental organization-provided legal aid when available. The legislative framework on domestic violence was a positive development, but the police was not sufficiently trained in assisting victims, there were no statistics on the cases and prosecutions and very few cases were referred to trials and even fewer led to convictions. The absence of effective free legal aid was a major obstacle for the victims of trafficking in persons, domestic violence, rape and other forms of sexual violence. The Committee should urge Greece to introduce legislation on free and experienced legal aid for all victims and competent interpretation and translation in the language foreign victims understood. Other issues of concern included under-representation and absence of minority Roma or Muslim women in post-primary education, marriage of girls under the age of 18, anti-smoking legislation, traditional patriarchal attitudes and gender-role stereotyping.

## **Angola**

Open Society Foundation Angola and Network of Women in Action, outlined key concern for women's rights in Angola, which included follow up of the implementation of the Convention, access to education for young girls, access to justice for young women in rural areas, maternal and child health care and domestic violence law. The Committee should address a strong recommendation to Angola to make functional the 2006 multisectoral Coordinating Council for Gender Issues and a team tasked with the follow up of the implementation of the Convention. There were reports of young pregnant girls being prevented from attending colleges in order not to influence other students, and the Committee should urge the State to undertake measures that would effectively guarantee access to education to all without discrimination. On the issue of access to justice for young women in rural areas, who suffered all kinds of violence, the Committee should recommend that Angola create measures and establish a legal protection of rights of young rural women and especially ensure the victims' right to effective access to justice. The maternal and child health sector was deprived of appropriate Government policies and investments; special measures should be undertaken by Angola to protect maternity rights as human rights.

## **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women took the floor and said that there had been insignificant changes with regard to legal harmonization and enforcement of the legislation and there were no changes in the constitutional provisions that guaranteed human rights and freedoms, while the notion of discrimination in the national legislation did not include sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds for discrimination. The many reasons why the adopted legislation did not produce the desired outcomes included insufficient respect for the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women and the 2008-2012 National Action Plan for

Gender Equality by the competent authorities, absence of consultations that ensured the participation of all stakeholders in the drafting of laws, and non-functional national equality machinery due to inactivity, poor capacities and unclear roles and competencies. There was a lack of commitment for the provision of the required resources, in particular financial ones, and for the implementation of planned gender equality activities. The discrepancy between declarative intentions in the adopted legislation and the factual status of women had increased, and of particular concern was the situation in the area of tradition and family upbringing, violence against women, employment of women, health care for women and the situation of rural women.

A representative of Roma Center Skopje took up the issue of the situation of Romani women in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia which had not changed since the last examination of this State in 2006. The responsible State institutions had not implemented concrete measures directed at Romani women and girls within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the two National Action Plans for Promoting the Status of Romani Women of 2008 and 2011. The Government should design and implement concrete measures supported with significant state funds for the purpose of overcoming the social and human rights barriers of Romani women to access the areas covered by the Convention. The links between the National Action Plan for Romani women and all other National Action Plans within the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the Strategy for Roma should be clearly detected and addressed in all future programmes for Roma and Romani women. All relevant institutions should collect disaggregated data and make them available to the public at large. Such data should be presented by the Government to the Committee and should cover the articles related to education, employment, health, and public and political participation with special focus on the Romani women.

### **Questions by Committee Members**

An Expert took up the issue of the conditions of detention in **Greece** and asked whether there was any information about the position of women and children among asylum seekers and migrants and whether their situation had improved. In recent years the prevalence of HIV/AIDS had increased in the country and the blame had been cast on sex workers.

On **Angola**, an Expert took up the issue of violence in rural areas and asked about the distinction drawn by the speaker between rural and urban areas. What was the situation today with regard to the implementation of the provisions of the Convention?

Concerning the legislative framework in the country which was not in line with the Convention in **the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, a Committee Expert asked the non-governmental organizations to comment on the prohibition of discrimination in two separate pieces of legislation and the lack of prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. What were the most important areas for the application of temporary special measures in the country today? Could the non-governmental organizations comment on the gap between Roma girls and boys and other girls and boys in the country?

### **Response by non-governmental organizations**

Answering questions on **Greece**, a representative said that it was important to always keep the context in mind that Greece as a border country of the European Union was the first to receive the influx of migrants. It was true that women and children faced more problems because most of the facilities were not gender specific and it was possible to find migrant and asylum seeking women and children who could be detained in police stations together with men detained on criminal charges. Minor migrant children sometimes were not reported as minors in order to avoid the consequences. HIV/AIDS was on the rise in Greece, and the Government of the time, in the run up to elections, saw it fit to arrest foreign women prostitutes and to publicly broadcast their pictures and personal details, with a request to men who had used their services to go and seek medical help immediately.

Representative of the non-governmental organization from **Angola** said that the Government controlled all free space of expression and civil society organizations worked with many constraints, including a lack of funds and resources because many donors had left the country. A video that had recently emerged about violence in urban areas had shocked the public, but this was a very visible example. In rural areas, the problem of violence was less visible because of the lack of electricity and social media and the situation of women there was very grave as they faced violence on a daily basis.

Representatives of organizations took the floor to respond to questions posed by the Committee on **the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** and said that there had been no changes in the constitutional provisions in the country. There had been recent changes in the definition of discrimination through the adoption of the new Gender Equality Law which gave a definition of discrimination identical to that of anti-discrimination legislation. Unfortunately, there had been no changes in the use of temporary special measures and the only area where temporary special measures were being applied was in political participation of women, but there was no clarity on how those measures should be applied in practice. Sexual orientation and gender identity were excluded from the general anti-discrimination law and the Gender Equality Law; the only law that recognised sexual orientation was the Patients Law. Without disaggregated data non-governmental organizations would be unable to establish the dimensions of discrimination faced by Romani women and girls, for example in education. The main points that should be underlined concerning the Romani girls were early marriages and poverty which often led to early marriages and school drop outs, and exact numbers of Romani children and among them girls, and how many among them were without personal identification.

In a series of follow up questions and comments, Committee Experts asked **Greece** about the situation of Muslim women in the country, what was their identity marker and the difference between Muslims of Thrace and other Muslims in the country, such as migrants. Could the non-governmental organization provide more information about discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS in **Angola**?

In response, a representative said there was a non-governmental organization representing Muslim women of **Greece** and they considered themselves of Turkish identity. The difference between Muslims of Greece and migrant Muslims were significant, from their right to exercise religion, the right to religious education and other areas and in fact those were two separate groups and there was very little communication between them.

There was a law on HIV in Angola which had provisions on discrimination; the problem in Angola was not the absence of laws but their implementation. One of the issues of people living with HIV was the stigma and discrimination they suffered within family and society.

*For use of the information media; not an official record*

CEDAW13/009E