

## NGO STATEMENT FROM NORWAY

### **To the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the Occasion of the Submission of the Initial Report of Norway at the 39<sup>th</sup> CEDAW Session.**

Madam Chair,

This statement represents the working group behind the shadow report from Norway. The working group consists of representatives from three women's organizations and the Secretariat for the Forum for women and development (FOKUS).

Lack of funding prevented the Norwegian women's organizations from presenting this report. We applied to the Norwegian government, but were denied funding. We thank IWRAW Asia Pacific for reading our statement to the Committee.

The Norwegian Government has developed many important Plans of Action. However, many challenges remain, in moving on from rhetoric to realities, from good intentions to implementation. A number of structural, attitudinal and practical obstacles still persist. Women's organisations are concerned among others about the following:

- the depolitization of "gender" in various contexts and rhetoric support of "feminism" without maintaining the real content of the concept,
- the ambiguity of the goal of "gender equality" and the tendency to equate it with a mechanical equal treatment of women and men regardless of circumstances, in other words, the government does not abide the principle of substantive equality in the Convention,
- the integration of women's concerns and gender equality issues into all embracing discrimination agendas, thus removing the specifics of gender discrimination and reducing the focus on gender specific approaches and measures,
- the tendency to promote changes in gender roles by giving men increased rights (for example as fathers) without a corresponding increase of duties and responsibilities, while women's rights (for example as mothers) are reduced and their greater efforts devalued, and
- the tendency to mix racism and discrimination of women, creating particularly degrading situations for women from non-Western countries, and
- the lack of emphasis on women, women's concerns and interests in many cases, concealing the real differences in the status, privileges and power of women and men.

In addition, we will point out a few key issues from our report. The full shadow report will analyze those and other problems in more details.

### **Incorporation of CEDAW into the Human Rights Act**

We recommend that the Norwegian Government immediately take steps to incorporate the CEDAW into the Human Rights Act. (page 9 of NGO Shadow Report)

### **National gender equality machinery**

We also suggest that the Centre for Gender Equality become re-instated as part of the Norwegian gender equality machinery, with the special mandate of improving women's conditions in society. (page 10 in the NGO Shadow Report)

Efforts to promote gender equality in public administration

More resources, more gender expertise and more effective tools are required in public administration to bridge the gaps between gender policy statements and results. Greater use should be made of gender-specific measure and management should be held accountable for results achieved with regards to gender equality. (pages 10 & 11 of Shadow Report).

### **Gender roles**

Stronger efforts are required on the part of government to combat pornography and the increasing sexualisation of the public space. The educational system should have an important role in raising awareness of how this affects women and children, and how it makes them more vulnerable towards sexual abuse.

A more systematic approach and actions are required to deal with the problems related to the intersection of gender and race.

Men should be actively involved in changing gender roles and promoting gender equality, but the way by which they are being involved, should be further examined. Measures must not lead to a weakening of the position of women. Though individual men might be discriminated against in specific cases, the overall picture of Norwegian society is one of discrimination against women, and this, as well as the fundamental aim of CEDAW, must not be concealed or pushed aside. (page 12-13 NGO Shadow Report)

### **Violence, trafficking in women and prostitution**

In June, 2007 the Ministry of Justice made a proposal that will allow legal prosecution of the buyer in prostitution. This bill is now circulating for comment. If the bill passes the Parliament, we will have the new law early in 2008. Women's organizations have argued for such a law for many years, and we are very pleased by this important effort from the Norwegian government to put an end to prostitution and trafficking in women.

Currently, the Norwegian government gives financial and political support to the webpage [www.sexhandel.no](http://www.sexhandel.no), as part of their Action plan against trafficking in women. The purpose was to reduce the demand side in prostitution. We think however, that this webpage encourages the customer rather than discourage him. The webpage normalizes and legitimates the buying of sex, and we therefore think that the webpage should be closed down. (pages 13-16 in the NGO Shadow Report)

Women in elected bodies

The authorities should reconsider the electoral laws and adopt compulsory gender quotas to increase the representation of women to elected political bodies. Research and information activities should be carried out so that both the political parties and the voters understand how the system works and are able to support women in the most effective way. (page 16 NGO Shadow Report)

Women's organisations

The authorities should give women's organisations working to improve the situation of women, higher status and more support. A report is requested from the Government describing the public funding of

NGOs and the nomination of participants in public committees, delegations and expert groups from a gender perspective. (page 17 in the NGO Shadow Report)

#### Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Government should report on measures and results of the Action Plan for Gender Equality in the Foreign Service (2002-2006), provide statistics regarding the representation of women in the delegations to international forums of various kinds and specify the specific organisations and level of posts of Norwegians working for international organisations. An action plan for gender equality in Norway's foreign policy as a whole is needed. (page 17 of NGO Shadow Report)

#### Security Council Resolution 1325

Women should be systematically involved to ensure women's security and increase women's participation in peace processes - inside or outside of the formal forums addressing questions of peace and security. The purpose should be to promote women's roles as agents for peace, not increase uncritically the percentage of women in the military. (page 18 of NGO Shadow Report)

### **Women in education and research**

The Government should initiate comprehensive research on why men and women make traditional choices in deciding on their education and careers.

Gender equality concerns should be taken into account in the determination of research priorities, design and execution and the Government should follow up in an active manner on the recommendations made by The Committee for Integration Measures – Women in Research to increase the proportion of women in senior academic posts. (page 20 of NGO Shadow Report)

#### Women's studies and gender research

Women's studies and gender research needs to be strengthened in addition to more focused equality research. An increased focus and more extensive research in the area of equal parenthood are particularly required. (page 20-21 of NGO Shadow Report)

### **Working life**

The segregation between men's and women's work should be reduced. The gap between men's and women's wages must be closed and efforts made to give women the opportunity to work full-time. The situation in the family, not only in the workplace, must be addressed. (page 21-22 of NGO Shadow Report)

#### Day Care Centres

Greater attention should be given to the quality of services in the day care centres and research should be conducted comparing private and public day care centres. Cash benefits to parents who do not use day care centres for children under 3 years of age, should be discontinued, due to the negative side effects. (page 22 of NGO Shadow Report)

On behalf of the working group for the shadow report, thank you for listening.