



Addressee: Member States

Paragraph #14 Session #3 (2004)

Full Text

To ensure that the concerns and priorities of indigenous women are properly taken into account, the Forum urges States:

- a. To take concrete steps to increase the participation of indigenous women in governance and decision-making structures at all levels;
- b. To clearly identify and define the issues and needs of indigenous women, taking into account regional and local cultural differences;
- c. To develop and strengthen structures and mechanisms for the advancement of indigenous women within the wider agenda for the advancement of women; to clearly define their mandate by taking into account the holistic and cross-cutting nature of indigenous women's issues; to allocate appropriate resources to those institutions; and to provide support from the national political leadership to those structures;
- d. To ensure the implementation of international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, regarding indigenous women, and to integrate those instruments into the formulation of a coherent national public policy for indigenous women (including legal frameworks, budget allocations and specific programmes and projects addressing indigenous women's issues);
- e. To ensure equal access of indigenous women to decision-making and governmental bodies, political parties, judiciary, trade unions etc.;
- f. To lend support to NGOs (both international and national) dealing with issues involving indigenous women;
- g. To increase indigenous women's capacity for decision-making and political participation, and to ensure that adequate numbers of indigenous women are placed in positions of political leadership as well as in governance and public

administration.

Comments

The Government of Canada reported the following in response to this recommendation:

(a) A federal/provincial/territorial/aboriginal forum addressing issues of concern to aboriginal peoples includes the participation of aboriginal women's organizations. A recent series of round tables held by the Prime Minister on issues such as housing, education and governance all included a gender perspective. Aboriginal women are also involved in the development of a report card on progress for aboriginal peoples.

(b) The Canadian Government's main departments dealing with indigenous women's issues are Status of Women Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Status of Women Canada has four bodies currently working on or planning actions or activities that directly correspond to the recommendations of the third session of the UN Permanent Forum, which often work in cooperation with and in support of, other Canadian government departments, including Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to advance the interests of aboriginal women.

- The Policy Research Fund supports gender-based policy research on public policy issues of concern to women in Canada. Specifically the Policy Research Fund has published research reports that look at the issues and needs of indigenous women.

Furthermore, training materials from the Gender-Based Analysis Unit have been used by the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada as a base upon which to develop their own training, and were later adapted specifically for policy and programme officers working on aboriginal issues.

(c) In 2003 the Status of Women Canada made a commitment to use its annual Family Violence Initiative allocation (\$1 million Canadian dollars over four years, from 2003-2004 to 2006-2007), to fund national initiatives of aboriginal women's organizations on the issue of violence against aboriginal women. In addition, women's programme funds continue to be made available to carry out initiatives at local, regional and national levels to address violence against aboriginal women and other issues of concern to them, including matrimonial real property rights, capacity-building for aboriginal women's organizations, Inuit women's participation in Arctic fisheries, involving aboriginal women in decision making, governance issues, and obstacles to the participation of aboriginal women in business.

The Policy and External Relations Unit works in collaboration with other departments to advance issues of concern to aboriginal women. It provides input and makes recommendations to government departments and agencies on various Cabinet documents relating to aboriginal people and to women specifically. It also coordinates current work being undertaken between federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women. To improve the situation of aboriginal women the ministers agreed to take joint and/or individual government action on access to programmes and services, public education and awareness, capacity-building and policy enhancement according to their respective priorities and needs. The ministers will provide an updated on their progress at the next federal-provincial/territorial ministers meeting in 2005.

The Government of Finland reported the following in response to the recommendation:

(a) Finland, as a member of the Arctic Council, has ensured the participation of the Sami people, including indigenous Sami women, on a permanent basis, in all phases of its activities. This includes the design of Arctic Council Projects.

(d) The prohibition of discrimination is embodied in numerous human rights treaties ratified by Finland, among others CEDAW. Finland has regularly reported to the CEDAW Committee about the respective legislative, judicial, administrative and other steps undertaken to implement the provisions of the Convention. The 5th report (submitted to the Committee in October 2003) includes also a chapter on Sami women. Information on Sami women has also been included in previous reports. The Committee has not addressed any concerns in its conclusions regarding Sami women in the 3rd and 4th reports in the 24th session on 21 January 2001.

(f) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment are taking part in financing the Arctic Council's projects ensuring the participation of the Sami people, including indigenous Sami women.

The Government of Norway reports the following:

(a) The Samedigii (Sami parliament) which is composed of 39 elected members included 13 women (33.3 percent) at the time of its inauguration in 1989. The number of women has fallen at every election since, and after the last election in 2001 there were only 7 women (17.9 percent). To increase the number of women voters enrolled in the Sami electoral register, the Samediggi has implemented promotional activities with financial support from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. The Samediggi is also authorised by regulations under the Sami Act to require that every list of candidates for

elections for the Samediggi includes at least 40 percent women.

(c) In Proposition 34 to the Odelsting (2004-2005), the Norwegian government proposes the establishment of a Gender Equality and Discrimination Ombud. The proposed mandate for the Ombud is to promote the rights of women and the rights of minorities, and to combat any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender and ethnicity.

(d) In Proposition 35 to the Odelsting (2004-2005) relating amendments to the Gender Equality Act (Act of 9 June 1978 No. 45), the government proposes that the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) shall be incorporated into Norwegian law.

In Proposition 33 to the Odelsting proposing legislation against discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity or religion in all areas of society, the government proposed that the UN International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) shall be incorporated into Norwegian law. In Proposition 34, proposing legislation on the establishment of a Gender Equality and Discrimination Ombud and the establishment of a Board of Appeal, the government proposes the inclusion of a section giving the Ombud responsibility for ensuring that Norwegian legislation and administrative practice are in accordance with CEDAW and ICERD. Norway ratified the optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

(e) Reference is made to the response to paragraph 14 (a)

(f) Most of Norway's direct support for indigenous peoples in development co-operation is channelled through Norwegian NGOs. Many of these organisations have partnerships with indigenous organisations, including indigenous women's organisations. In line with the guidelines for Norway's efforts to strengthen support for indigenous peoples in development co-operation, Norway will ensure gender issues and the situation of women are on the agenda in all efforts to support indigenous peoples.

(g) Sami women are well educated. Around 26 percent of the women in the traditional Sami areas have a graduate or post-graduate degree.

Although the recommendation is addressed to governments, UNIFEM has reported on its activities with respect to this specific recommendation:

(a) UNIFEM has collaborated with several indigenous women leaders through participatory capacity building projects that work to promote indigenous women's leadership and their presence in public decision making bodies.

(b) UNIFEM recognizes the varied concerns and diverse needs of indigenous women. It recognizes there is no homogenous indigenous women's movement and that indigenous women's groups merit individual consideration and response

to their needs. For this, UNIFEM works with and responds to indigenous women's groups individually and separately to identify the different issues that effect them.

(c) Gradually, with the incorporation and increased participation of indigenous women in the political sphere, UNIFEM is working to strengthen existing bodies for the advancement of indigenous women and through facilitating space and funding, and also helping to create interagency support for indigenous women's issues, UNIFEM anticipates that the mechanisms for indigenous women's issues will be increasingly mobilized and strengthened over the next few years.

(d) UNIFEM hopes to work with the government and political institutions to create checks for the integration of indigenous women in CEDAW's credo.

Area of Work

Indigenous Women