

Check against delivery

58th Session of the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women

**Opening Statement by Mr. Gintaras Klimavičius,
Vice-minister of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania,
Chair of the Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men,
at the consideration of the Fifth periodic report of Lithuania
9 July, 2014, Geneva**

Madame Chair,
Distinguished Members of the Committee,
Dear observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, it is my great pleasure and honour to make an introduction for the constructive dialogue with the members of the Committee on the Fifth periodic report of Lithuania under the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It is important for my delegation to hear the views of the members of the Committee, which will allow us to further improve and advance the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. Let me introduce the members of the Lithuanian delegation:

Mr. Rytis Paulauskas, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Lithuania to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, Deputy Head of Delegation. In charge of women in diplomacy, general human rights issues;

Ms. Vanda Jurseniene, Head of Equality between Women and Men Division, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Deputy Head of Delegation. In charge of gender equality law, including definitions, programmes and measures, including budget, institutional mechanisms, women in decision making, women and media, stereotypes, gender mainstreaming, women in employment and labour law, equal pay, paternity/maternity leave;

Ms. Dalia Ambrozaitiene, Deputy Director General of the Statistics Lithuania. In charge of social and demographic statistics;

Ms. Ausrute Armonaviciene, Head of Prenatal Health Care Division at the Mother and Child Health Department, Ministry of Health. In charge of health issues;

Ms. Audra Ciapiene, Minister Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva. In charge of communication and coordination;

Ms. Vilma Daugaliene, Deputy Director of Rural Development Department, Ministry of Agriculture. In charge of issues of rural women;

Ms. Kamile Michailovskyte, Chief specialist of the Division of Expertise of Legislation Drafts, Legal System Department, Ministry of Justice. In charge of legal matters, including access to justice, violence, legal aid, justice and courts;

Mr. Tomas Milevicius, Deputy Head of Family Policy Division, Family and Communities Department, Ministry of Social Security and Labour. In charge of family and violence issues, issues related to children, social services and elderly women;

Mr. Giedrius Vaidelis, Director of Education Development Centre. In charge of education and science issues;

Mr. Tomas Zilinskas, Director of Public Security Policy Department, Ministry of the Interior. In charge of violence and trafficking issues, women in public administration and civil service;

Composition of delegation reflects requirement of the Committee regarding gender balanced composition of delegations. However, in Lithuania women prevail in civil service: comprise 76 percent of civil servants, occupy 35 percent of all managerial positions, and 61 percent of political confidence positions. Total number of women managers in public sector is close to 40 percent. Proud to notice, that - Lithuania is one of few countries, where two out of three highest state positions are held by

women: Woman-President, recently re-elected for the second term, and Woman-Speaker of the Parliament.

Madame Chair

After submission of Fifth periodic report of Lithuania in 2011, there have been a number of developments at the national level and intense cooperation with international organisations. I am glad, that Lithuania directly contributes to the work of this Committee, as Prof. Dalia Leinarte is elected to the Committee members in 2012. This year Lithuanian representative prof. Jonas Ruskus was elected to the members of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Lithuania became a non-permanent member of UN Security Council and a titular member of the Governing body of the International Labour Organization. Lithuania seeks full membership in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Lithuanian reports were considered in a number of United Nations Human rights bodies: in the Human Rights Committee in 2012 in the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2013, in the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee against Torture. Lithuania has submitted initial report under UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012 (the Convention and its Optional protocol were ratified in 2010) and - to the Council of Europe - periodic national reports under the revised European Social Charter and Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. National report on implementation of Beijing Platform for Action was submitted to UN ECE in April, 2014.

Accession to international human rights instruments

In 2013 Lithuania signed Council of Europe *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. Currently a special

working group in charge of analysis of ratification possibilities is in the process of formation.

Lithuania also ratified the *Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* and has introduced amendments to the *Criminal Code* and the *Code of Criminal Procedure* which will render more effective fight against the sexual abuse of children. Help Centre for children - victims of sexual abuse is to be established before the year 2016, in accordance with Icelandic model Barnahus.

In 2013 Lithuania ratified International Labour Organisation's Maritime Labour Convention which provides comprehensive protection at work for seafarers. Lithuania has reported on implementation of a number ratified ILO convention.

At the end of 2013, the Parliament ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

On 23 April 2013, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance was also ratified. At the same time, the relevant amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure were made.

In 2012 Lithuania ratified the Council of Europe *Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings*. One of the implementation measures - financial support for NGO's projects that focus on social assistance and reintegration into the society and labour market of the victims of trafficking in human beings and commercial sexual exploitation. Majority of victims are women.

Recently Lithuania has started adhering to the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship* and to the *Action Plan for Youth – Giving Youth a Better Start in the Labour Market*.

As of 1 May 2004 Lithuania has been a full member of the European Union. Lithuanian legislation has been harmonized with progressive EU gender equality law, counting more than 50 years. I am glad to mention, that the *European Institute for Gender Equality*, the only specialised EU agency on gender equality issues, established in 2007 is located in Vilnius.

Lithuania has held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2013. One of the priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency was promotion of substantial gender equality with the particular focus on effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for acceleration of women's advancement and gender equality, and on women in decision making, in particular economic, as well as women in the top positions in science. Council Conclusions on effectiveness of institutional mechanisms were adopted, suggesting concrete actions for the EU member states to strengthen effective functioning of institutional mechanisms and indicators in line with the objectives of Beijing Platform for Action, including indicator on collection, analysis and dissemination of gender-segregated statistics.

In cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality, equality as a horizontal priority was integrated to employment, particular youth, and the EU structural support priorities and side event on Female Genital Mutilation was arranged.

Prevention of domestic violence was between the priorities during the Lithuanian Presidency as well. In December, 2013 in Vilnius the European Crime Prevention Network met to discuss the best practice and to award the best project of prevention of domestic violence. As a result the Handbook for practitioners of the prevention of domestic violence was published. Handbook contains crime prevention projects from

the EU Member States as well as the Conclusions and Recommendations on Prevention of Domestic Violence.

In the Framework of the Presidency, antidiscrimination and Roma issues, in particular Roma women, were addressed as well. Important step was made to stop poverty. During the Lithuanian Presidency a common agreement to establish a new financial instrument for the most deprived persons was found. Consequently, this year a *Regulation on the Fund for European aid to the most deprived* was adopted and almost EUR 3.5 billion will be distributed to EU member states till 2020.

Lithuanian Chairmanship to international and regional organisations, such as the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2011 and Nordic-Baltic cooperation in 2012, contained gender equality activities on women's entrepreneurship, women and media, gender balance in decision making, combating trafficking in human beings. Permanent Gender Equality Working Group was established during Lithuanian Presidency of the Community of Democracies in 2011.

Lithuania puts full efforts to mainstream gender equality on the level of international development cooperation. The contribution to the human rights and gender equality development in the partner countries in EU neighbourhood and other regions is one of our development cooperation policy aims, defined by the national Law on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (adopted in 2013). Hence, the Program on Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion has been consistently financially supporting gender equality projects and initiatives on gender equality and women's rights, implemented in the partner countries, such as Georgia, Ukraine and others.

Lithuanian Government constantly seeks to enhance its efforts in implementation of the UNSCR resolution 1325 and other related resolutions. In December 2011

National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 was adopted and will be reviewed this year. Lithuania has joined the informal group of “Friends of Women, Peace and Security” within the UN in 2012 and actively participates in its activities. Recent Lithuanian non-permanent membership at the UN Security Council added more importance and pace to the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 at national level and abroad.

Madame Chair,

Since the Fifth periodic report was submitted in 2011, some legislative initiatives in favour of gender equality were adopted and came into force.

Amendments to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, adopted in 2012, in force since March 2012, introduced obligation of public institutions to ensure equal treatment of women and men, when providing administrative and public services, introduced the chapter containing actions which are to be recognised as violation of equal rights of women and men, specified terms of consideration of complaints by Equal Opportunities Ombudsman.

Amendment to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, adopted in 2013, introduced obligation for public institutions and municipalities to ensure that gender equality measures and actions are included into strategic plans. This provision will come into force on October 1, 2014. It strengthens obligation of gender mainstreaming in all policy areas, in particular – on municipal level. In order to support municipalities to smoothly implement this provision, gender equality trainings in all municipalities are carried out since the beginning of 2013, supported by awareness raising activities.

The most recent Resolution of the Government, approved in May 2014, highlighted equality between women and men as a separate policy area, raising its importance and status.

Access to Justice

The Government of Lithuania, understanding the importance of the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, aims at ensuring that various institutions work in order to effectively protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, to adequately react to breaches of human rights and to determine such system, that could help to ensure adequate measures of protection of human rights including affording state guaranteed legal aid. New Law on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid came into force on 1 January 2014. It broadened the opportunities for persons to choose legal counsellor which could provide them with secondary state-guaranteed legal aid, better control of provided services was ensured, one-stop-shop principle was implemented for persons applying for secondary state-guaranteed legal aid, conciliatory mediation was established.

National policies and mechanisms

Promotion of gender equality not only de jure but also de facto was and remains one of the policy priorities across all policy sectors. Measures of already third National programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2010-2014, continuously implemented by all Ministries, in cooperation with women's organisations and other relevant stakeholders, ensure complex, systematic and consistent elimination of inequalities and constant attention to gender equality issues. This result-oriented Programme, based on the binding requirements on gender mainstreaming of the Law on Equal Opportunities for women and men, ensures dynamic promotion of gender equality in all areas. Well developed and constantly improving gender equality statistics helps to identify gender gaps, ensures better targeted decisions.

An independent external comparative evaluation of the entire period of implementation of this Programme is being initiated this year. Outcomes of this evaluation are to be ready before the end of August. Results and recommendations of this Study, as well as observations and recommendations of your respectful Committee will valuably contribute to the new National Gender Equality Programme 2015-2020, other relevant Strategies, Programmes and Action plans aimed at non-discrimination, combating violence, improvement of gender balance in science, as well as strengthening gender mainstreaming in other areas.

The Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, consisting of representatives of all Ministries and representatives of women's organisations, monitors and coordinates implementation of the Programme and presents annual reports to the Government. Governmental Gender Equality unit – Division of Equality between women and men of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour serves as the secretariat of the Commission, from gender equality perspective drafts and assesses legislation and submits conclusions and recommendations, drafts and implements gender equality programmes, projects and measures, initiates researches, provide consultations, ensures implementation of EU and international gender equality commitments. Concluding Observations of this Committee will be presented and discussed at the nearest meeting of the Commission and recommendations issued for relevant Ministries, municipalities, other relevant stakeholders in order to enhance follow up.

Long-term attention to women's issues and work towards elimination of inequalities and ensuring **de facto equality between men and women** within the framework of the long-term *National Programme on Equal Opportunities For Women and Men*, led to some positive results. Lithuania is proud of high percentage of well educated women, small gap between employment rates of women and men, and women's

unemployment rate lower than men's, low rate of part time job both of women and men. We succeeded to decrease gender pay gap almost twice and increased number of women entrepreneurs. There was an increase of women in political decision-making. Total number of women managers in public sector is close to 40 percent. All these results contributed to women's empowerment, economic independence and higher status.

Combating violence

Lithuanian Government gives priority attention to combating violence against women, in particular domestic violence. In 2013 an Inter- Institutional working group on coordination of protection of domestic violence was established. The Group consists of the representatives of the key institutions participating in the process of reducing the domestic violence.

Amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure were drafted and adopted in 2013 and 2014. These amendments made it possible to ensure an effective protection against repeated violence and influence from the offender to victims of domestic violence during pre-trial investigation and judicial case hearing; the institute of public (maintained by the State) accusation, criminal procedure and enforcement in the cases of domestic violence has been established. Following this special law, pre-trial investigation is commenced in all cases when there are elements of domestic violence. The amendments have enabled competent and immediate provision of specialised integrated support for victims of violence.

Provisions of Criminal Code (namely Articles 149 and 150) establish criminal responsibility for sexual abuse irrespective of personal relationships of persons. This is confirmed both by judicial doctrine and by theory of law. The fact of marriage is not a factor eliminating criminal responsibility for sexual abuse. Criminal laws and

judicial practice ensures adequate protection of women from sexual abuse, including abuse in marriage and rape in marriage is criminalised.

In the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, domestic violence is attributed to the category of offenses of public importance. It covers action and omission which makes intentional physical, psychological, sexual, economic or other effects to person incurring physical, material or non-pecuniary damage. The Law provides that victim of domestic violence is not only a person against whom the violence has been used, but also a child, who witnesses such a violence or lives in a violent environment. The police officer is obliged to take immediate measures to protect the abused person and to initiate an investigation without submission of an official complaint.

In April 2014 Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania passed substantial amendments to the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence. The amendments improved the protection of the victims and their children, imposed the duty to the police to inform specialised assistance centres about all the victims of domestic violence. Following the new provisions specialised complex assistance from 2016 will be provided round the clock.

National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Provision of Assistance to Victims for 2014-2020 was adopted by the Government on May 28, 2014. Strategic goal of the Programme is reducing the level of domestic violence. The Programme is aimed to widely inform the society about various manifestations of violence, its consequences and necessity to stop it, develop intolerance for the violent behaviour, to improve mechanism of delivery of the specialised assistance for the victims of the domestic violence, developing cooperation of the state and local institutions and bodies, NGO's, other institutions and the broad society. Currently the Action Plan for 2014-2016 is in the process of preparation.

Lithuania has a network of the specialised assistance centres covering all the country. Since October 2012 centres offer specialised assistance services to the victims of domestic violence, including psychological, medical and legal help. Last year the centres, run by the women NGO's, offered specialised assistance for more than 5 thousand victims of domestic violence.

Implementation of the *National Programme for the Prevention of Abuse of Children and Assistance for Children 2011–2015* provides for complex of instruments to eliminate causes of abuse, develops a system of assistance and preventive measures of abuse and bullying of children, who are likely to suffer or who have suffered from psychological, physical and sexual abuse and neglect at school, as well as their families.

Combating trafficking

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania in 2012 approved the Inter-institutional Action Plan of the National Crime Prevention and Control program for the years 2013 to 2015 with one of its priority activities - strengthen the fight against trafficking in human beings and provide assistance for victims.

Non-discrimination

Lithuanian Government proceeds with consistent measures promoting non-discrimination under the Inter-institutional Action Plan for 2012–2014. For instance, implementation of educational measures of non-discrimination and equal opportunities, raising legal consciousness and public awareness, increasing mutual understanding and tolerance on a number of grounds such as gender, race, nationality, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion and others. In recent years Lithuania has

undertaken several steps in legislation imposing severe criminal liability for the hate crimes.

Aiming to improve further the overall system for the protection of human rights, Lithuanian Government has initiated the procedure to reinforce the status and role of Parliament's Ombudsmen Office, which should function as an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. After the public consultations, including the consultations with the *Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights*, the draft law was presented to the Parliament in 2012 and is now being considered under the ordinary legislative procedure.

Women's employment and entrepreneurship

The Lithuanian Government has taken complex employment decision providing support to employers, employees, education and vocational guidance under Inter-institutional *Action Plan 2014-2016* implementing the *Employment Increasing program*, adopted in 2013. We created the *Specialists Qualification Map* in 2012 aiming to ensure a compatibility of vocational and tertiary education with labour market. Women willingly participate in the active labour market policy activities, seeking employment, self employment, establishment of their own businesses. As a result, women's unemployment rate is lower as men's.

The priority measures for 2012-2016 are aimed at increasing youth employment, promoting entrepreneurship, enhancing youth unemployment prevention, improving vocational orientation and counselling. Seeking to ensure adequate provision of services, higher education institutions develop open online courses, establish necessary infrastructure for increasing accessibility and quality of studies. Moreover, state social insurance is guaranteed to full time students, until a diploma is obtained or up to 24 years of age as well as medical residents.

Women of disadvantaged groups

Following Recommendations of the Committee, the Study on situation of elderly women, disabled women, rural women, migrant women in the areas of employment, social services, health protection, opportunities to participate in social and cultural life and other important aspects was carried out. Conclusions of the study identify problems experienced by different groups of women, such as insufficient accessibility to health protection and social services, difficulties to find a job and what are the reasons, lack accessibility to legal aid, insufficient income etc. The Study is to be presented for the public in autumn this year. Recommendations of this study would be integrated in different programmes, aimed at social cohesion, non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all.

Ministry of Culture took over coordination of issues concerning the protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities as well as fostering their culture. Implementing National Minority Policy Development Strategy every year partial funding is allocated to projects submitted by national minority NGOs, such as cultural centers or weekend schools where national minorities learn their native history, traditions, language and culture. Higher education institutions organise special trainings for academics regarding methods for teaching students of national minorities.

The Action Plan for the Integration of Roma into the Lithuanian Society for 2012–2014 was prepared in consultation with representatives of the Roma national minority. It focuses on Roma education, participation in the labour market, development of social skills and promotion of public tolerance. By the end of this year it is planned to adopt a new Action Plan which additionally will include measures on Roma housing and empowerment of Roma women.

Seeking to ensure that families have adequate housing facilities the Law on Support for Acquisition or Rental of Housing was drafted, which establishes compensation of a part of rental payments for families and persons entitled to social housing, who rent housing from natural or legal entities.

Impact of economic downturn

Admittedly, we have faced challenges too. The global economic crisis was one of such challenges. It has diverse impact on the lives of people. As regards impact on gender equality issues, on one hand, crisis hit first of all male dominated sectors, such as construction for instance. Consequently, men's unemployment increased. Female dominated sectors, first of all service sector was less affected and women secured their workplaces. Their unemployment rate increased less. On the other hand, cuts in salaries first of all affected female dominated sectors. However, even though it posed significant difficulty for maintaining the same level of protection of economic and social rights, austerity measures, such as temporary reduction of salaries in the public sector as well as revision of certain benefits in 2010-2011 made it possible to keep the social protection at the relevant level and provide social assistance at least for the most vulnerable groups of the population. Now reduced benefits are restored to the previous amounts.

Madame Chair,
Committee members

Lithuanian Government reiterates its commitment to upholding international obligations towards promotion of women's empowerment, elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and protecting women's human rights.

Let me conclude by emphasising that Lithuania highly values constructive cooperation with the CEDAW Committee. Progress has been made in elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, towards de facto equality between women and men, yet there is still much more to achieve. We do believe, constructive dialogue with this respectful Committee will lead us to further progress.

My delegation is ready to provide you with more detailed answers regarding any topic of interest. I am looking forward to a truly interactive exchange of views.

Thank you, Madame Chair