



**Statement**

**by H.E. Ms. Erika Asztalosné Zupcsán,  
Deputy State Secretary for Social Policy  
of the Ministry of Human Resources  
on the occasion of the discussion  
of the 7th-8th periodic Hungarian National Report  
on the implementation of the  
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination  
Against Women**

**Geneva, 14 February 2013**

**Madam Chairperson!**

**Distinguished Members of the Committee!**

**Ladies and Gentlemen!**

As the head of the Hungarian delegation, it is my pleasure to take part in this constructive dialogue with you. In our view it is important during this dialogue to give an account of the results attained in implementing this convention at a national level, and at the same time to discuss the issues and difficulties in its implementation. I believe that this joint exchange of ideas will further advance women's rights in Hungary, as well as the development of new methods and solutions to improve equal opportunities for women. We welcome the presence of the representatives of several Hungarian non-governmental organizations.

The rights of women are fundamental human rights, and their enjoyment should be ensured as a highest priority in all areas of life.

On behalf of the Government of Hungary, allow me to express my appreciation to the Committee for its efforts aimed at protecting women's rights.

The Hungarian Government fully subscribes to the principles and standards contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and is equally committed to implement all the obligations contained therein.

Allow me to introduce our delegation, consisting of 25 members. In appointing of its members our explicit objective was to enable experts from all respective areas of public administration to present the measures being taken to improve the status of women in Hungary.

I am leading the delegation as the Deputy State Secretary with responsibility for Social Affairs at the Ministry of Human Resources, as the main government entity responsible for social policy including the issue of equal opportunity for women and men.

The State Secretariats for Social and Family Affairs, Healthcare, Education and Social Inclusion have also sent delegates.

From the Ministry of National Economy, the Ministerial Commissioner responsible for improving the labour market prospects for women is also participating.

Furthermore our delegation includes representatives from the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as from the Permanent Mission of Hungary to the UN.

I am especially delighted that representatives from the independent judiciary, and the Chief Prosecutor's Office, as well as the Equal Treatment Authority and the Central Statistical Office, have also accepted my invitation to participate in the delegation.

**Madam Chairperson!**

Since our last CEDAW dialogue in 2007 Hungary has gone through several socio-economic processes that have had a fundamental effect also on the status of women.

I. Following the parliamentary elections of 2010, the coalition of the FIDESZ – Hungarian Civic Union and the Christian Democratic People's Party obtained a two-thirds majority and as a result a new Fundamental Law of Hungary was adopted, which entered into force on 1st January 2012. This Fundamental Law opened a new chapter in Hungarian constitutional history with the primary objective not to change the system of public law, but to bring about an economic and moral revival after the past twenty years of normative tinkering.

Hungary is committed to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The new Fundamental Law of Hungary grants wider citizenship rights than ever before, since it was drafted in line with United Nations conventions on human rights - including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women - as well as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. In the new Fundamental Law, Hungary guarantees the basic rights of every person without any discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, gender, disability, language, religion, political or other views, national or social origin, financial, birth or other status. The Fundamental Law clearly stipulates that the State shall ensure not only equality before the law, but also equal opportunities. Therefore, it protects women, children, the elderly and the disabled by separate and specific regulations. In order to provide further protection of their interests and opportunities it contains certain responsibilities and expectations, like ensuring school attendance of children.

After the Fundamental Law was passed, numerous **cardinal laws** were enacted which have had an impact on the status of women. Such laws include the Act on the Protection of Families, the revised Labour Code and the Act on the Operation of Non-Governmental Organizations. Furthermore, the Media Act and the Act on Equal Treatment and Promotion of Equal Opportunities have also been amended.

Since 2010 the **system of public administration** has undergone fundamental changes: the number of ministries has been streamlined from the previous 15 to the present 8. The economic and structural renewal that followed the elections in 2010 gave rise to a transformation of **the system of institutions responsible for the improvement of the status of women**. Consequently, the responsibility to support the advancement of women is no longer the exclusive responsibility of just one ministerial department, but it is a horizontal task across the whole public administration.

1. The **Ministry of Human Resources** has the primary responsibility for ensuring the equality between women and men. The Department for Family Policy is responsible for strategies and related plans of action in implementing the relevant national policies, including the coordination of national implementation arising from CEDAW obligations. The Department for Equal Opportunities coordinates the operation and the maintenance of the National Network for Family, Volunteer Houses and Equal Opportunities. The Government's aim in maintaining this network is to ensure that policies for creating equal opportunities of underprivileged groups, including women, are implemented at local level. The main tasks of the Equal Opportunities Offices include shaping the attitudes of society, and establishing partnerships and coordination between non-governmental organizations and other organizations involved in creating equal opportunities, as well as between local governments and employers.
2. **The Ministry of National Economy established the position of** a Ministerial Commissioner responsible for the improvement of the labour market prospects of women.

3. The **Ministry of Public Administration and Justice** has a statutory responsibility for preparing legislation and codification, such as drafting the Criminal Code and other laws to prevent violence against women. In December 2012 the advisory body of the Government, the Working Party on Human Rights established the Round Table on Human Rights. This provides a forum where 45 non-governmental and expert organizations can engage in dialogue with representatives of the government in thematic meetings. One of the 12 thematic issues in which NGOs can provide recommendations is dealing with the rights of women.
4. Regarding the **Equal Treatment Authority**, in 2012 fundamental modifications were carried out in the legislation. The authority is an autonomous administrative body in terms of its budget and status. Its independence is guaranteed by law. From 2013 the Authority reports exclusively to Parliament.

II. It is not only the laws and the structure of administration that have undergone substantial change. New priorities have been set up reflecting the new approaches of the Government in relation to **population and family policy as well as the status of women**.

**One of the new priorities is to manage the demographic situation.** This is a particularly great challenge for Hungary. The number of births has fallen drastically since 1981, reaching a hundred-year low in 2010. Sensitivity with regard to human life is understandably very high in Hungary. For this reason, the Government, right after entering into office, dedicated a separate State Secretary to the issue of family policy and a separate Department to promote and reinforce the values of family and of raising children. The aim is to provide incentives that bridge the gap between the planned and the actual number of children born; thereby increasing the fertility rate. Separate projects have been launched to change public attitudes and attain a more family-friendly approach, to promote a better balance between family and work. Special emphasis was made to widen the range of services available to pregnant women who may be at risk, to improve the way conflicts in relationships are handled and to educate to family life.

**Another important priority is to enhance job opportunities for women and to increase family benefits.** A series of positive steps, launched with record funding of 11 billion forints, aims at improving the balance between work and family life, and at increasing the number of places in day care centres and nurseries. This sum is more than in any previous years.

In 2013 a **Job Protection Action Plan** was launched, which is a programme that will have the most far-reaching effect on the employment of women in recent decades. This programme will provide tax relief amounting to a total of 300 billion forints to employers of high-risk employees and small enterprises.

The Government places great emphasis on **dialogue with civil society**. In addition to the priority areas, civil initiatives and concepts are also given due consideration. There are several recent examples of this: non-governmental organizations started a campaign to have domestic violence recognised as separate facts of case in criminal law. The regulation of home births was enacted and brought to general public attention as a result of a civil initiative. Another initiative resulted in a series of conferences on the topic of "*Women in the national economy*", held with the Ministerial Commissioner responsible for the improvement of the labour market prospects of women. One of the main forums for dialogue is the Round Table on Human Rights, as mentioned above.

**Distinguished Members of the Committee,**

I would now like to highlight some of the progress which has been made on the basis of the recommendations by the Committee in 2007.

A significant step forward in the area of the prohibition of discrimination and the creation of legal equality is that the new Fundamental Law explicitly states that women and men are equal before the law, and, as a new element, prohibits the negative discrimination of persons with disabilities.

Hungary has made remarkable advances in **the fight against human trafficking** in the last two years. In line with international requirements, we amended the Act on Crime Victim Support, which entered into force on 1st January 2013, mandating victims of human trafficking to be given special assistance. Also coming into effect on 1st January, a Decision issued by the Government lays down the rules of identifying and dealing with victims. We have also started the internal procedure required to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The new national strategy against human trafficking is due for completion on 31st May 2013. In preparing this strategy, many consultations have been held with the participants of the governmental mechanism responsible for the fight against human trafficking, as well as with members of the **NGO Round Table**.

In Hungary, more government attention is being devoted to the complex issue of **domestic violence**, and a wide-ranging social dialogue is evolving on this topic. In accordance with international treaties and standards, the Criminal Code contains several statutory definitions which encompass this kind of criminal conduct, regardless of whether the crime was committed against a family member or a stranger.

On 17th September 2012 the Parliament backed the citizens' initiative submitted to classify domestic violence as a separate offence under criminal law. As a result of the Resolution of the Parliament, a working party was established with the objective of creating the legal framework to deal with domestic violence. A separate codification working group has been created in order to achieve this aim.

This working group held its last meeting on 30th January 2013. At this meeting it was reiterated that the proposal is expected to be discussed in Parliament following a public consultation, and will be incorporated into the new Criminal Code on 1st July 2013. In connection with this, I would like to emphasize that Hungary welcomes the new, comprehensive campaign of UN Women named COMMIT. As part of this campaign Hungary pledges that a new prevention programme will be launched as a pilot project for the prevention of victimization, with the inclusion of highly experienced non-governmental organizations. The aim of the project is to organize awareness-raising and training activities to sensitise teenagers of secondary school age, so as to minimize the risk of them becoming victims of crime.

The recommendations of the CEDAW also underline that **Roma women** are subjected to negative discrimination at multiple levels. That is why we consider it a significant step forward that the Government tackles the problems of Roma as a national priority, not merely as poverty issue.

The fight against extreme poverty and child poverty, the improvement of opportunities for further education among disadvantaged and the most disadvantaged children, the improvement of labour market prospects for people living in extreme poverty and the

integration of the Roma people are the priorities of the State Secretary Responsible for Social Inclusion, at the Ministry of Human Resources. In addition to fostering social equality and opportunities, great importance is also attached to campaigns against ethnic discrimination.

One of the greatest successes of the Hungarian EU Presidency in 2011 was the development and adoption of the European Strategy for the integration of Roma. As a result, Member States prepared their own national Roma strategies and submitted them to the European Commission. The Government prioritizes the National Social Inclusion Strategy, which includes complex measures, such as programmes simultaneously aimed at improving the conditions of education, housing, healthcare and employment, and designates the people responsible, allocates the necessary funds and determines the time frame. Key partners in implementing the strategy are the National Roma Self-government, churches, non-governmental organizations and municipal governments.

On behalf of the Hungarian Government, in May 2011, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán signed a Framework Agreement with the National Roma Self-government which lays down specific commitments regarding the most pressing issues facing the Roma. The fundamental conceptual difference between the previous agreements and the current one is that the Government is now seeking solutions to problems in cooperation with the Roma as partners.

**In the field of education Hungary** has dedicated particular attention to the respect for human rights and the equality of genders. The new National Core Curriculum, which will enter into effect in September 2013, contains information on human rights and the gender equality. It specifies that Social and Civil Competences are based on the knowledge and understanding of democracy, the notion of citizenship and civil rights. The Core Curriculum emphasizes the importance of non-violent behaviour, respect for human dignity and rights as well as the transfer of positive attitudes, which will serve to ensure continued respect for equality, democracy and religious and ethnic diversity.

**Regarding the labour market prospects of women,** it must be acknowledged that when the new Government was formed in 2010, the situation it inherited was not easy to manage. Women's employment is a key area, where the Government has implemented a range of far-reaching measures in the last 2 years. The effects of these measures started to take effect in 2012, and we anticipate further improvements in the coming years, as we are planning to implement other measures as well.

The main economic policy objective of the Government is to create a million new workplaces in this decade. This can only be achieved by reinforcing the economic role played by women.

It is worth highlighting that the economic crisis had a less damaging effect on the role played by women in Hungary that it has on men.

One of the most important regulatory measures we have taken is to enact the new Labour Code, which sets out the essential framework required to establish a more flexible labour market. Additionally, on 1st April 2012, a Ministerial Commissioner was appointed in the Ministry for National Economy responsible for improving the status of women in the labour market.

The interim data of 2012 indicate a significant increase in employment among women with the number of women in work rising above 1.8 million, representing a twenty-year high. The statistics for the full year are not yet available, but we are expecting that the rate of employment among women will surpass 52%, the highest it has been since 1992.

On 1st January this year, the above mentioned Job Protection Action Plan was launched financed by the Government with 300 billion forints in 2013. Under this Action Plan,

employers can apply for substantial tax relief when employing people who face disadvantages in the labour market, including young people under the age of 25, over the age of 55, and in positions which require no special qualifications as well as parents with small children. This programme affects close to 30% of female employed.

In 2012, there were several EU-funded programmes in operation in Hungary to help women return to the labour market and to improve their work skills. Among the most important of these were the employment programmes conducted by the job centres, as well as tenders to promote a better balance between work and private life, including creating new child daycare places both at local level and in the workplace, and encouraging greater job flexibility.

It is important to point out that, according to OECD statistics, the discrepancy in salary levels between men and women in the years 2007 to 2009 was, among the countries assessed, lowest in Hungary.

As far as horizontal segregation is concerned, it is important to highlight that there are several sectors, in which traditionally more men are employed than women. Nevertheless in Hungary the proportion of women is higher in these sectors than the EU average.

Between 2007 and 2011 in Hungary, the employment index gap of women in rural areas compared to that of women in cities and towns get close, showing that the rate of employment among rural women in Hungary enjoyed an increase.

**Madam Chairperson!**

**Distinguished Members of the Committee!**

**Ladies and Gentlemen!**

The measures outlined above are just a part of the efforts carried out by Hungary in order to implement the goals of the Convention as widely as possible, and demonstrate Hungary's untiring commitment to the standards and values expressed in the Convention.

We are, however, fully aware that there are certain areas where the measures taken are not yet fully sufficient, or have not yet reached their intended effect. We are looking forward to receiving questions and observations from the distinguished members of the Committee during this constructive dialogue. We hope that the expert recommendations will assist Hungary in better implementing the rights enshrined in the Convention. Thank you!