



Opening Statement by the Head of Delegation of the Slovak Republic

H.E. Mr. Fedor Rosocha

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Combined Fifth and Sixth Periodic Reports of the Slovak Republic

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*Check against delivery*

Mme. Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to be here today and lead the delegation of the Slovak Republic at the sixty-second session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, on the occasion of consideration of the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women submitted by Slovakia in accordance with Article 18(1) (b) of the Convention.

The Slovak Government highly values the considerable efforts of the Committee in the area of promotion of gender equality and protection of human rights for women and girls. We consider the periodic reporting on compliance with the Convention a crucial mechanism for the achievement of an effective implementation of the rights and norms emerging from the Covenant in order to follow the long term aim to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

Before touching upon particular issues related to the consideration of the periodic report, allow me to introduce the members of the Slovak delegation who look forward to answering your questions. In view of the wide range of areas covered by the Convention, the Slovak delegation is composed of experts from numerous government bodies:

**Ms. Oľga PIETRUCHOVÁ**, Director, Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic,

**Ms. Monika KORKOŠOVÁ**, Director, Department of Lifelong Learning, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic,

**Mr. Milan KOLLÁR**, Director, Human Rights Department, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic,

**Mr. Ján HERO**, Director, Department for Conceptions, Analysis and Regional Coordination, Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities,

**Mr. Marian FILČÍK**, Director in charge, Department of Human Rights, Directorate General for Legislative Affairs, Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic,

**Ms. Ľubica ROZBOROVÁ**, Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family,

**Ms. Soňa DANOVÁ**, First Secretary, Permanent Representation of Slovakia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva.

Mme. Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Slovakia is a State Party to all core international human rights treaties, and its human rights legislation meets the highest internationally recognised standards. In addition to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, the prohibition of discrimination remains extensively covered by the Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and amending certain acts (the so-called Anti-discrimination Act). Moreover, the principle of equal treatment of men and women rests guaranteed by all the international treaties on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, to which the Slovak Republic acceded by succession in 1993. Pursuant to Article 7 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, international treaties on human rights and fundamental freedoms take precedence over national laws.

Regarding the process of the preparation of the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention at national level, the Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family finalized the report. The Report was submitted by the Slovak Republic after its approval by the Government in July 2013 in accordance with Article 18 of the Convention. The report contains information on legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures adopted from 2009 to 2013. The Slovak Republic provided the Committee with replies to the list of issues in June 2015.

Mme. Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I will now turn to the main developments and recent updates in the areas covered by the Convention that have taken place in Slovakia.

The Act No. 365/2004 on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and Protection Against Discrimination and the Amendment of Certain Acts, also known as the Anti-discrimination Act, adopted in 2004, regulates the application of the principle of equal treatment and determines available remedies for legal protection.

The principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination refers to prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex, religion or belief, race, nationality or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital and family status, colour, language, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, or as a result of announcing crime or other antisocial activities (whistleblowing) following the new whistle-blower protection legislation. In addition to the prohibition of discrimination, the Act also emphasizes the need for adoption of positive measures to ensure protection against discrimination. According to the Act, gender discrimination also refers to discrimination on grounds of pregnancy or maternity, as well as discrimination on grounds of sexual or gender identification.

The Government of the Slovak Republic adopted the evaluation of the implementation of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2010-2013 on 9 July 2014 by Resolution No. 335/2014 whereby creation of the National Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for Gender Equality 2014-2019 were pronounced. The Government of the Slovak Republic adopted the new National Strategy for Gender Equality for the years 2014-2019 and the related National Action Plan for Gender Equality for the years 2014-2019 on 20 November 2014. The specific activities and measures were prepared and discussed in cooperation with NGOs and the Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality. The mentioned strategy and the action plan remain interconnected and represent a comprehensive conceptual framework for the promotion of gender equality. Those documents address and propose measures in 6 areas of concern:

1. Economic empowerment and independence
2. Decision-making

3. Education
4. Dignity
5. Institutional mechanisms
6. International cooperation

The Strategy and related action plan stem from the basic strategic documents of the European Union and the Council of Europe. These commit the member states to adopt positive measures aimed at reaching gender equality.

Moreover, both documents simultaneously reflect the recommendations made by relevant international monitoring bodies, particularly recommendations formulated in the *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* as well as the commitments made by the Slovak Republic itself as a response to these recommendations.

Since 2010, the agenda of gender equality has been discussed and covered in the framework of the Committee of the National Council for Human rights and National Minorities of the Parliament. In 2011, the reconstruction process of the consultative bodies resulted in creation of a new institutional mechanism — the Governmental Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality.

According to the approved statute, the *Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality* is a permanent professional, advisory, coordinating and consultative body of the Government responsible, inter alia for promoting of the principle of equal treatment and equality, including gender equality. It consists of several specific committees. The *Committee on Gender Equality* represents one of the advisory bodies of the Council.

Regarding the strengthening of the institutional mechanism on gender equality in Slovakia, in September 2012 the Parliament approved the government bill amending and supplementing the *Act No. 575/2001 Coll. on the Organization of the Activity of the Government and on the Organization of the Central State Administration*, whereby the gender equality and equal opportunities agenda has become the

competence of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Since then, Ministry, specifically the Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities has been responsible for the coordination of national policy in the area and ensures the cross-departmental implementation of gender equality within the ministry and beyond. Furthermore, the Department plays a prominent role in coordinating the implementation of gender equality and non-discrimination horizontal principle across all operational programs of European structural funds.

Moreover, since January 2015 the Department reports directly to the minister which has further strengthened its position. We would also like to report strengthening of the human resources capacity of the Department, consisting of 14 employees as of to date, which represents the highest number of employees of any gender equality department in the history of Slovakia.

The Department was in charge of conducting the National Project of Institute for Gender Equality supported by the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion which took place from 2009 to 2014. The aim of the project was to establish efficient mechanisms, instruments and methods for the implementation of the gender equality principles into practice, raise awareness about gender equality, and reinforce expertise of relevant stakeholders who work in the area of prevention and elimination of gender inequality. A nation-wide awareness campaign focusing primary on explaining the gender pay gap in the context of gender equality took place in 2014. The campaign's objective was to explain that gender stereotypes are present since the birth of a child and gender-stereotypical upbringing extensively influence the future position of women and men in the society at all levels, in public as well as in private life.

Regarding the issue of gender based violence; the Slovak Government adopted the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women for the years 2014 – 2019. One of the crucial projects in this area of concern was the establishment of the Coordinating Methodical Centre for Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in accordance with Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention. The Centre was officially established in April 2015. The

primary aim of the Centre is to create, implement and coordinate a comprehensive national policy in the given area. A team of experts has been set up within the Centre, these are responsible for the scientific coordination and supervision of the implementation of the system of prevention and intervention, victim support and services in the field of violence against women and domestic violence. The establishment of Centre also involves professional coordination of activities using common methodical guidelines for the provision of services in the area of primary prevention and elimination of violence against women and domestic violence as well as creation of conditions for multi-agency cooperation. Research and monitoring are also among the planned activities of the Centre.

Trainings of law enforcement agencies, including police officers, investigators, prosecutors, judges, as well as health care professionals on gender-based and domestic violence represent crucial activities of the Centre in cooperation of the Council of Europe and other domestic and international partners.

In addition to the above mentioned tasks, the Centre will provide analyses of the current legislation on violence against women and domestic violence and contribute to the preparation of new legislative measures and strategic materials in cooperation with other relevant ministries, including the special Act on the Prevention and Elimination of Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence.

The first draft proposal of this Act has been submitted for public discussion in June 2015. The discussion takes place with relevant stakeholders; especially with government institutions and NGOs. The discussion and work on a legislative proposal will continue during next months until a consensus with NGOs is reached.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour established a free nonstop helpline in order to provide an efficient support to women experiencing violence and considering solving their situation. The priority remains women's and her children's safety. Therefore, all actions and steps are planned together with woman who experiences violence or a threat thereof. Furthermore, the Office of General Prosecutor established a free

helpline and an e-mail address where a specific motion to investigate a case may be reported. The Office refers the reported case to the relevant police department.

On the regional level, the Slovak Republic was one of the first states to sign the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention. Allow me to report, that at present the process of harmonization of the domestic legislation with the norms emerging from the Istanbul Convention takes place. The government adopted a resolution announcing the ratification by June 2016 at the latest.

Regarding the area of affirmative action in the area of gender equality, the Ministry of Labour launched the implementation of the project titled 'Family and Work' in 2015, using affirmative action to support employment of mothers of small children which remains far below the employment of men in the same age group. The ministry supports the employment of mothers with children in pre-school age by reimbursing 90% of the total labour costs (salary plus social and health insurance) when a mother is employed on a newly created working place with flexible working arrangements. Furthermore, the ministry also supports the establishment of flexible child care facilities either created directly by employees or by any other organisation contracted by the employer. The aim is to help women sustain their skills and competitiveness while helping them back into the labour market. The response from the employers has been very positive and many applications have been submitted to date.

In order to prevent uninformed health choices and procedures of Roma women as well as women from poor communities in general, the Ministry of Health implements the project "Healthy Communities", financed from EU structural funds, 190 health workers monitor segregated Roma settlements and localities ensuring an elementary health education in 259 such a settlements. Health education assistants distributed basic information on prevention of diseases, on negative impact of addictive substances, on the need of preventive examinations and compulsory vaccination as well as the importance of basic hygiene, on reproductive and sexual health of women, particularly pregnant women and mothers, on the use of medicines and consultations with a physician regarding the care of new-borns.



The *Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma communities* started in 2013 with an implementation of a project aimed at integrating Roma children into early childhood education. The project focuses on children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development and aims at empowering families (mothers especially), preparing children for transition to compulsory education and improving teacher-parent cooperation.

Mme. Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to assure you, that the Slovak Republic takes the obligations emerging from the Convention very seriously and we recognise the work of CEDAW, as one of the crucial treaty-based body which monitors the implementation of one of the core international human rights treaty.

The Slovak delegation is ready to provide updates on recent developments in the area of elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and we are looking forward to engaging in what we consider to be an open and constructive dialogue. We remain open to answer questions put forward by the distinguished members of the Committee.

Mme. Chairperson,

Now I would like to give the floor back to you and the members of the Committee.

Thank you.

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