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**Opening Statement – PART II**

**at the Examination of Norway by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women on the basis of Norway's 8<sup>th</sup> state report on the implementation of the  
International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

**Time:** Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012

**Place:** Palais des Nations in Conference Room XVI

**Hours:** 1000 - 1300

**Speech length:** –18 - 20 minutes

Madame Chair Silvia Pimentel,

Members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you.

A few more words on our work on *Gender-based violence and the Norwegian Crisis Centre Act of 2010*. I would also like to say a few words about *women in the Norwegian labour market, including women with an immigrant background and women with disabilities*. Finally, I will give you the latest developments relevant for lesbian, bisexual and trans- (LBT) women in Norway.

Over the past 10 years the Government has developed different measures to protect the victims of gender based violence.

Criminalization and strong law enforcement measures are vital.

Strategies to protect and empower the victims are also important.

But alone they do not offer the full solution to end this violence.

Madame Chair,

Violence against women is not a private matter. The Norwegian Government has a responsibility to put in place measures not only for the prosecution of the offender and for the protection and empowerment of the victims, but also for the treatment of the offenders.

~~Measures preventing the offenders from attacking again, are crucial.~~

This is why the Norwegian government today offers (therapy) treatment to the offenders and why the Government decided to expand this service by establishing a nation-wide system that offers (therapy) treatment to the offenders.

Further, the Norwegian government wants to engage men and boys in the struggle to eradicate violence against women and girls.

In 2011 our ministry initiated a campaign directed at men and boys, in co-operation with the Norwegian White Ribbon campaign and support from the Norwegian Football Association. The aim of the campaign was to sensitize boys and men on gender based violence and to change attitudes and get rid of harmful stereotypes, meeting men and boys in traditionally male arenas like football matches.

Madame Chair,

In Norway's last report to CEDAW you will find information about the Norwegian Crisis Centre Act from 2010.

This Act represents a milestone in our work to help victims of violence. For the first time ever, a public authority, namely all municipalities in Norway, have a legal duty to provide shelter service to women, children and men who are subject to or threatened with violence in their homes or in close relations. The shelter service must comply with certain standards as defined in the Act.

Madame Chair,

The most recent developments in Norway concerning gender based violence are:

Norway signed, in July 2011, *the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*. This Convention is the first legally binding instrument in the world creating a comprehensive legal framework to prevent violence, to protect victims and to end impunity of perpetrators. It defines and criminalises various forms of violence against women (including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, stalking, physical and psychological violence and sexual violence).

The Government's launching in January this year of a new (one year) plan of action to combat domestic violence, was a follow-up of the former three action plans.

The Government has decided for the first time ever to present a new action plan with measures targeted to prevent rape.

The Norwegian Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with other ministries, is currently preparing a White Paper on domestic violence. The Government's plan is to submit this White Paper to Stortinget (the Norwegian Parliament) autumn 2012.

The Norwegian Ministry of Justice has furthermore initiated a survey on spousal homicide cases.

This year, a nationwide survey on violence against women will be conducted by the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS).

The Norwegian Ministry of Justice has initiated an evaluation of the police's work on domestic violence, including the victim's experiences with the police. The evaluation is expected to be completed by December 2012.

Madame Chair,

Some comments on *women in the Norwegian labour market*.

Around 73 percent of the female population in Norway between 15 and 64 years were employed in 2010. The corresponding figure for men was 77 percent. Only Iceland has a slightly higher employment rate for women than Norway.

The rate of women working full-time has increased over the past five years and is now close to 60 percent.

Over the past ten years, the unemployment rate for women has been lower than the unemployment rate for men. In 2010 only 3 percent women in the labour force were unemployed compared to 4,1 percent of the men.

However, the occurrence of involuntary part-time work is higher for women than for men. The Government has decided to evaluate the measures of today that aim at reducing involuntary part time work.

The Ministry of Labour is in the lead here and it is a challenge to secure full time work to all who want it.

I have to add that working part-time is a legal right in Norway for those who want to do so.

The gender pay gap in Norway is quite stable on the average of 15 per cent. (That is the ratio for all employees based on gross hourly male and female wages, calculated also for part-time workers.)

The Government submitted for the first time in history a White paper on Equal Pay which to the Parliament in November 2010. It was debated on and approved in April last year.

This is currently being followed up by my ministry and other ministries. Our ambition is to strengthen some new regulations in the Gender Equality Act and forward a proposition on anti-discrimination legislation to the Parliament in 2013.

Some of the proposed measures are to be incorporated in other acts.

Madame Chair,

Today around 12 percent of the Norwegian population are persons with an immigrant background, irrespective of their country of origin. Around 200 000 out of 660 000 with an immigrant background in Norway are women between 20 and 66 years of age.

Statistics show that the immigrant population as a whole has a lower labour market participation than the majority. The immigrant women have lower labour market participation than the immigrant men.

Some groups of women with an immigrant background meet different barriers when they wish to enter the labour market, or they stay close to the gender roles from their country of origin, and do not enter the labour market.

The Government gives priority to addressing these challenges, through measures that are individually designed to increase required qualifications and provide language and professional skills that are necessary for employment or further education.

The Introduction Program, by law, and Norwegian Language Tuition, also by law, are important measures in this respect. And we do employ gender targeted measures.

Since 2010 the Government has appointed two expert committees to review various aspects of the policies on migration, welfare and integration. Both committees have submitted extensive and much debated reports including several policy proposals targeting labour market participation for immigrant women. My Ministry is currently considering the follow up on these proposals. The Government will

submit a White Paper on Integration Policy to Stortinget (the Norwegian Parliament) later this year. Gender equality and women's issues are central in the discussions in the White Paper.

Madame Chair,

Our policies on disabilities are fully concurrent with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Norway aims at ratifying the CRPD and the Government will submit a proposition to Stortinget (the Norwegian Parliament) this spring.

This Convention, as you may recall, has several articles that specifically address women and gender equality. These are article 3 litra g) (gender equality) article 6 (women and disabilities) article 16, no.5 (freedom from violence), 28 no. 2 litra b) (social protection and standard of living). This is very instructive to us when following up the Convention. We thus need to mainstream our policies.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2009 a new Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility act entered into force in Norway. The Act prohibits discrimination on grounds of disability. The purpose of the Act is to promote equality and ensure equal opportunities for all and to prevent discrimination on the grounds of disability. It applies in all areas of society, i.e. in the labour market, education, housing, goods and services. Part of the Act is on universal access and universal design.

Women with disabilities face major challenges when seeking to join the labour market. Many studies show that both women and men with disabilities in general encounter specific barriers in the transition from education to employment.

According to 2011-figures from Statistics Norway 42% of all persons with disabilities in Norway are working. In addition 78.000 persons with disabilities, this figure includes women and men, want to work and that 22 000 of these are women and men under the age of 30 years.

Madame Chair,

We have to take stronger action to secure job possibilities for these young women and men.

Therefore the Government's New Job Strategy for Persons with Disabilities is a targeted initiative to secure jobs for more persons with disabilities and to reduce the number of benefit recipients. In 2012, this Strategy is aimed primarily at young persons with disabilities under the age of 30.

We know that women with disabilities are more vulnerable to violence and sexual harassment than others, especially women with cognitive impairments. We have addressed this issue and intend to follow up properly.

Madame Chair,

I will briefly give you the latest updates concerning *lesbian, bisexual and trans- (LBT) women* in Norway.

Results from a living conditions survey from 2008 show that lgbt-persons more often than heterosexual persons have mental health problems. The survey did for the first time include question on sexual attraction and identity. But knowledge and research are, in general, still scarce.

The most important news for all lgbt-persons, I believe, is the planned expansion of legal rights and legal protection. Last summer my minister, Mr. Audun Lysbakken announced his plans to put forward a Bill containing a proposal for more cohesive anti-discrimination legislation. This Bill will be presented to Stortinget (the Norwegian Parliament) early in 2013. The new act will provide protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression and will strengthen the legal position of lesbian, bifle and trans-women.

Another important milestone is the establishment of the national LGBT Knowledge Centre in 2011. The centre's mandate is to promote the improvement of living conditions and the quality of life for lgbt-persons in all fields of society. This centre acts as a key point in communicating across sectors with government offices, schools and work places etc. and with the NGOs.

We need more knowledge: In 2011 we have commissioned a project on the living conditions of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons. A second project on the life situation of transgendered persons has also been commissioned. We are looking forward to the results in 2013.

In 2012 the following research projects are under planning: 1) Domestic violence directed against lgbt-persons and 2) Children who grow up in families where the parents are lgbt-persons. We take care to include a gender perspective throughout these projects.

Madame Chair,

These are a few glimpses of the latest developments in Norway since we submitted our 8<sup>th</sup> report 2010.

I hope that the information given in our opening statements together with Norway's 8<sup>th</sup> state report, the reports from the NGOs and the Ombud, together with our written response to your list of issues, have given you and The Committee members a sufficient picture of how we work on gender equality in Norway today.

We look forward to participate in a constructive dialogue today.

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Thank you for your attention.