



Check against delivery

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL POLICY

**Presentation of the Fourth and Fifth Periodic Report of the Republic of
Macedonia on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against
Women**

**Deputy Minister
Ibrahim Ibrahim**

Geneva, 21 February 2013

Distinguished Chairperson,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Allow me to start by expressing our great appreciation of having the opportunity to exchange opinions with the distinguished members of the Committee on the implementation of the obligations arising from the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the Republic of Macedonia. We believe that the Committee, through its commitment to the realisation of the objectives of the Convention, makes an essential contribution towards raising the awareness about the need to eliminate the various forms of discrimination against women, and the need to improve the status of women worldwide. On this occasion, I would like to point out that there is still plenty of joint work to be done, which requires further efforts by the Governments, the non-governmental sector and the international community. Still, the fact that the Convention is almost universally ratified is yet another confirmation of the significance and relevance of this instrument for improving the situation of women around the world.

You already know, but I would still like to remind you of a few facts: the Republic of Macedonia inherited the Convention from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Convention entered into force in our country on 11 November 1991, and the Republic of Macedonia ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on 17 October 2003.

In the year of 2004, the Republic of Macedonia submitted the Initial, Second and Third Periodic Report. On 25 January 2006, a delegation of the Republic of Macedonia presented the aforementioned Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, after which the Committee provided its final comments and recommendations on the implementation of which the institutions in the Republic of Macedonia have worked devotedly ever since.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

In the year of 2011, the Secretariat of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations invited the Republic of Macedonia to submit the Fourth and Fifth Periodic Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, being responsible for the preparation of the Report and being the competent institution for issues on which reports are given before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, conducted the preparations for producing the Report. In addition to the line ministries, the civil sector also took part in the preparation of the Report by providing suggestions, opinions and comments via participating in consultative meetings and submitting written suggestions. The received suggestions and comments, upon being reviewed, were adequately incorporated into the final report.

The Report contains all of the changes that occurred in the reporting period regarding the legal regulations, and the progress achieved in the social and economic life directed towards gender equality and establishing equal opportunities for women and men in all spheres of social life.

In accordance with the concluding observations and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in our Report on the Convention, progress was found in numerous fields, including education, healthcare, political participation, and the non-governmental sector. Yet, there still is a lot of work to be done, especially in the spheres of employment, enhancement of the situation of women living in rural areas, social and economic life, and violence against women, in order to ensure equitable implementation of all the provisions of the Convention in all areas of interest to women in the Republic of Macedonia.

This Report and the dialogue with the members of the Committee are of great importance, since they provide clear guidelines for future activities aimed at further improvement of the status of women in Macedonian society.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

The fundamental human rights and freedoms recognised in the international law, as well as the conforming to the generally accepted norms of the international law, are the fundamental values of the constitutional order of the Republic of Macedonia. The basic principle of equality, that is to say, of non-discrimination, established by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, guarantees that the “citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are equal in their freedoms and rights, regardless of gender, race, colour of skin, national and social origin, political and religious beliefs, property and social status. All citizens are equal before the Constitution and law”.

These constitutional provisions have been elaborated on in numerous legal regulations. Accordingly, the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women addresses the issue of gender equality and protection from discrimination on grounds of gender in a comprehensive manner. Furthermore, this issue is also given attention to in a number of other laws, especially in the fields of criminal, family and labour legislation which govern the prohibition of discrimination in specific domains and promote the principle of equality.

In relation to gender equality issues, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia is on the right track. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, within which the Department for Equal Opportunities functions, strongly and continuously

supports the activities of women directed towards greater democratisation of the country in accordance with the objectives and priority activities of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality for the period from 2007 to 2012. In order to be in line with the main purpose of the global social changes, as well as in order to create a system which would incorporate the decisions of the international regulations, numerous activities were conducted in the Republic of Macedonia in the past period. It should be emphasised that almost all of the activities were realised and are still being realised via joint action of the women from the Republic of Macedonia that belong to various structures, namely, non-governmental organisations, political parties, the government, the parliament, the local self-government, the trade union, and women experts.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

In order to further harmonise our legislation with the European standards and to incorporate the recommendations by the international organisations, the new **Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** was adopted in January of 2012. The passing of this Law further regulated the issue of establishing equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men, provided the adoption of general and special measures for establishing equal opportunities for women and men, and determined the rights and obligations of the entities responsible for providing equal opportunities for women and men, as well as the procedure for identifying unequal treatment of women and men, that is to say, the protection of the rights in case of detected unequal treatment of women and men by the Representative for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

Significant progress in the promotion and protection of equal opportunities, via a more complex approach to the issues, was additionally made with the adoption of the **Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination** in the year of 2010; this Law presents a complete legal framework for protection against discrimination on various grounds. The Law aims to provide measures and activities for prevention of discrimination, whilst establishing adequate mechanisms and means of legal protection in case of discrimination on various grounds at the same time. Therefore, this Law is an especially significant instrument in dealing with double and multiple discriminations which women in particular are facing as a result of the intersection of gender with other categories of identity.

Within the context of **the economic empowerment of women and reduction of poverty and the high unemployment rate among the female population**, the provisions included in the **Law on Labour Relations** are of great

importance. Pursuant to this Law, women and men have equal rights and opportunities to access the labour market and the job position. The principles of prohibition of discrimination in employment, prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace, and prohibition of harassment and sexual harassment were introduced. This Law guarantees equal conditions for professional development and advancement, as well as equal pay for equal work.

In regard to the institutional framework for gender equality, it should be mentioned that the Republic of Macedonia has established a National Mechanism for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men at central and local level. At the national level, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is the competent ministry within which the Department for Equal Opportunities and the State Counsellor for Equal Opportunities are directly responsible.

Moreover, at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, there is a civil servant appointed on the position of legal representative for identifying unequal treatment on grounds of gender, who is obliged to conduct the procedure for protection against discrimination on grounds of gender for actions undertaken by entities in the public, as well as in the private sector.

Pursuant to the Law on Equal Opportunities, all ministries have appointed civil servants as Coordinators and Deputy Coordinators for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men, the obligations and responsibilities of whom are provided by law. They are responsible for the introduction of the gender perspective in their respective ministries, and are obliged to submit annual reports on the undertaken activities to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Within the structures of the National Mechanisms for Gender Equality, the **Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men at the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia** occupies an important role. Together with the Women Parliamentarians' Club, these two bodies present mechanisms for implementation of the gender perspective in the highest representative body for policy creating and decision making.

The gender mechanisms at the local level within the institutions are composed of the following structures: Committees on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and Coordinators for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

The key document on the basis of which the policies and programmes for promotion of gender equality have been created thus far is the National Plan for Gender Equality for the period from 2007 to 2012. According to the Assessment of

the implementation of this plan, which was done in the year of 2012, the issue of gender equality is increasingly receiving its adequate position within the important issues of the country and is incorporated into the strategic documents.

The incorporation of gender perspectives in the mainstream social trends, policies and practices is conditioned by the fulfilment of certain institutional preconditions. The Republic of Macedonia worked very devotedly towards that end in the past years. With the establishing of the National Mechanisms, the foundations of the national strategic policy were built, which is also a reflection of our commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women. A further argument in favour of the above-stated is the adoption of the Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2013–2020 timeframe, the National Plan and the Annual Operational Programme for Gender Equality. For the first time in the Republic of Macedonia, this Strategy will be adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. In the process of incorporating the gender perspective, a giant step was made with the adoption of the Strategy for Gender Responsive Budgeting 2012–2015. Pursuant to this Strategy, the state administration bodies are obliged to incorporate the principle of equal opportunities for women and men within their respective strategic plans and budgets.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

The promotion of human rights of women and gender equality is a permanent task of all social actors. In the past years, the Republic of Macedonia, pursuant to its Constitution and as a candidate country for membership of the European Union, undertook numerous activities at legislative and operative level aimed at enhancement of the overall position of human rights, and, accordingly, the rights of women and enhancement of gender equality.

Starting from the last strategic document, namely, the National Action Plan for Gender Equity, the Assessment indicates a good degree of realisation of the promotion of human rights of women, via monitoring and amending the national legislation in accordance with the international standards and EU directives, via dissemination of the international documents on women's rights and establishment of a mechanism for keeping records of the procedures for discrimination on grounds of gender, as well as via efforts for strengthening the institutional capacities.

The equal participation of women in the decision-making processes in the public and political life is of vital importance to the democracy of each country. The efforts that the Republic of Macedonia made in the past years for greater inclusion of women show positive achievements; however, the results indicate that there still is work to be done in regard to this issue. Specifically, a positive trend is identified

when legislation has provided specific measures. Upon the adoption of the Electoral Code in the year of 2006, the number of women parliamentarians in the parliamentary compositions at the national level has reached the critical figure of 30% (at the moment, out of the total number of 123 parliamentarians at the Assembly, 38 are women parliamentarians), although the **recommendations by the Council of Europe call for increased representation of 40%**. One fact that has to be emphasised is that, thanks to the increased number of women in the highest representative body, numerous issues have been discussed and considered in terms of gender equality. Moreover, it has to be pointed out that in the past period the dialogue with the citizens has been enhanced by holding meetings and public debates.

Moreover, a further positive point is the fact that the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia provides that the composition of working bodies and survey committees be determined in accordance with the Law on Equal Opportunities.

When it comes to representation of women at local level, the situation is different. In comparison to the local elections in the year of 2005, with the last local elections in 2009 the participation of women in the councils at the local level was increased by 4.3%; however, the desired number of women councillors was not achieved. Namely, **upon the last local elections, the percentage of the representation of women in the councils is 27%**. However, there is a great disparity between representation of women in different municipalities. Namely, there are municipalities in which the share is higher than 41% (a total of three municipalities), there are municipalities in which the share is higher than 30% (a total of 25 municipalities), in most of the municipalities the share is between 20% – 30% (a total of 32 municipalities), but, unfortunately, there are still many municipalities in which the participation of women is lower than 20 % (a total of 25 municipalities).

Regarding the **executive authority**, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia is composed of three women out of 23 members in total, specifically, one woman Vice-President of the Government and two women ministers. Among the deputy ministers, four out of 19 are women. According to the official statistics from the State Statistical Office, women compose 27.8% of the members of the legislative and executive bodies, state officials, managing civil servants, diplomats and directors.

In relation to women's representation in the appointment of ambassadors and diplomatic representatives, the Law on Foreign Affairs has to be mentioned; this Law provides that the principle of equal opportunities for the genders be respected in the

appointment of ambassadors. In addition, an increase of the total number of women employed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the diplomatic and consular missions has been identified; their participation since the year of 2007 is about 41%.

During the period from 2006 to 2010, a positive trend of equal participation of elected women and men judges was observed in the **judicial power** in the Republic of Macedonia. Specifically, more than a half of the elected regular judges are women, which is also the case in the Administrative Court of the Republic of Macedonia where elected women judges are predominantly represented in comparison to men judges. Only the situation in the Supreme Court differs, for there the representation of elected men judges is higher in comparison to elected women judges; to be precise, 68% in the year of 2006, and 71% in the year of 2010.

That same trend is noticeable in the public prosecution, that is to say, in the basic and higher public prosecutor's offices equal representation of women and men is observed, whereas in the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Macedonia the difference is in favour of men, namely, the representation of women was 28% in the year of 2006, and 31% in the years of 2009 and 2010.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

The healthcare is an important field in which it is necessary to incorporate the gender perspective. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Ministry of Health continuously adopt programmes which contain measures, duties and activities for the healthcare of the population of the Republic of Macedonia that refer to the female population or contain specific gender-sensitive components.

In recent years in the Republic of Macedonia great attention has been paid to the health of women, and hence various programmes have been prepared and implemented with the purpose of preventing and protecting women's health and raising the awareness of women regarding their own health care. Yet, further continuous informing of women regarding the access to various healthcare services is needed, especially for the vulnerable groups.

Regarding malignant diseases, official data show that there is a high mortality rate from the diseases of breast and uterus cancer, which is primarily due to the late diagnosis, that is, due to not establishing the diagnosis in the early stages when the chances of successful treatment are higher.

As a measure for increasing the level of prevention, in the year of 2007, free-of-charge Pap tests were done for 17,000 women throughout the Republic of Macedonia in the public and in some private gynaecological institutions. The scope in the year of 2008 was 12,000 women regardless of whether the tested women had

or did not have health insurance. In the year of 2009, via the Programme for Early Detection and Prevention of Diseases of the Reproductive Organs among the Women in the Republic of Macedonia, 3,000 women without health insurance were entitled to free-of-charge Pap test.

Additionally, with the purpose of reducing the mortality rate of cervical cancer in the Republic of Macedonia, a free-of-charge human papillomavirus vaccine was provided for all girls aged 9 to 15, in healthcare facilities licensed for vaccination with this vaccine. Since November of 2009, mandatory active immunisation against the human papillomavirus was introduced in the Republic of Macedonia for all girls at the age of 12, with immunisation scope of about 50 %.

Since 2007, with the amendments to the Law on Health Care, the implementation of the Programme for Early Detection, Diagnosis and Treatment of Breast Cancer in the Republic of Macedonia was initiated. The Programme is completely free-of-charge, and hence women who want to get examined are exempted from financial expenses. The number of examined women was 12,500 in the year of 2007, 22,587 in the year of 2008, and 36,000 in the year of 2009. One of the objectives of the Programme for the following period is to create conditions for initiating the implementation of the organised screening throughout the country.

With the aim of providing more efficient social protection for the marginalised groups of citizens, the new Law on Social Protection was adopted in June of 2009, via which the social protection system and organisation, as well as the rights, financing and the procedures for realisation of social protection rights were redefined.

The gender structure of the elderly population is recognised in the National Strategy for Elderly Persons 2010 – 2020, but it requires identification of gender responsible measures for protection of elderly persons via the strategy in that field. However, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia takes serious steps in order to change the current practise of mostly institutional to extra-institutional and decentralised protection of elderly persons. In this context, in addition to the existing state homes for elderly persons, 13 private homes have been licensed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for professional work with elderly persons, several day-care centres have been opened, and the service of providing care to the elderly at home is currently being piloted, through the civil sector.

In the field of social financial benefit, official data show that there is considerable disparity in the exercising of this right between women and men.

Significant progress was made by the Institute for Social Affairs; specifically, in the year of 2009, the Institute, within its competences, started to implement specific activities directed towards: strengthening of the capacities of the expert

workers at the Centres for Social Work and the professional institutions for gender equality and social work, as well as of the employees at the Institute for Social Affairs for conducting gender analyses. Thanks to this, the first gender analysis on social risks of the data from the resource centre at the Institute for Social Affairs was performed in the year of 2012. Statistical data on social risks show gender disproportion in the number of registered male and female service beneficiaries in various categories.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

The series of reform processes in the field of educational in the recent years made it possible for the educational process to be enhanced, and hence allowed the possibility for easier access to the educational institutions for all students, regardless of gender, and ethnic, social or other orientation. By increasing the contribution in education, to be precise, 3.6% to 5% of the GDP, it has been heavily invested in education, which has also resulted in enhancement of the opportunities for better access for girls.

According to the data on primary education from the State Statistical Office, the gender structure of students enrolled in the years of 2009, 2010 and 2011 show that there were more male children enrolled in primary education; to be precise, in comparison to female students, 6,851 more boys were enrolled in 2009, 6,537 more in 2010, and 5,990 in the year of 2011. The percentage of male children enrolled in 2009 was 51.7% whereas the percentage of female students was 48.3%; in 2010, the percentage of male students was 51.6% whereas the percentage of female students was 48.4%; and in the year of 2011, the percentage of male students was 52% whereas the percentage of female students was 48%.

The official figures regarding persons who dropped out of primary education in the years of 2010 and 2011 show that the difference between male and female children is not great, but yet, girls are more numerous.

What can be concluded is that in primary education the same gender structure among male and female students can be observed each year. The number of students that dropped out of primary education is extremely small, and it amounts to 0.2%.

In the academic year of 2008/2009, the **compulsory secondary education** entered into force. All students of primary and now compulsory secondary education that study in schools located at a distance of about 2.5 km from their place of residence are provided with free transport; if there is no organised transport, students

are provided with free accommodation and free textbooks. Through the Conditional Cash Transfers Project, secondary education students whose parents are social welfare beneficiaries are provided with financial support conditioned by their regular school attendance.

The trend of increased inclusion of students in **university education** is similar to that in secondary education. The existence of a great number of higher education institutions, both public and private, amounting to 94 faculties in the academic year of 2008/2009, allowed easier access and greater selection possibility. The opening of 46 dispersed study programmes in 15 towns in the Republic of Macedonia allowed the reduction of the costs of university education and increasing the inclusion of females in higher education institutions.

According to the data from the State Statistical Office regarding the last three years, a growing number of female students enrolled in higher education is observed. In terms of **graduates**, it is also noted that there is a growing number of female students who graduate. In terms of students enrolled in **postgraduate studies**, a slight advantage of female students in contrast to male students is observed. Out of the total number of 3,655 enrolled master's students in the academic year of 2010/2011, 2,069 were female students, whereas 1,586 were male students, or, expressed in percentage, 53% of the overall number of enrolled master's students were female, whereas 47% were male.

Within the higher education, there is an Institute for Gender Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, whereas the Gender Equality course is found in several curricula and institutes, including the Institute for Peace and Security and the Institute for Sociologic, Political and Legal Research. By analysing the situation in the field of education in terms of equal opportunities for women and men, **progress and greater inclusion of female students is observed** in all levels of education; what is more, sometimes the percentage of enrolled female students is higher. The greater inclusion of female students from the ethnic communities in secondary and higher education is also registering an upward trend.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

Economic empowerment is one of the most important factors and objectives in achieving gender equality. In the past years, a positive shift has been made in terms of introducing the gender perspective in the labour market policies and strategies. A progress has been made in the legal defining of prohibition of discrimination on grounds of gender in employment and in the workplace, and

provisions that allow workers to reconcile their work with their family responsibilities have been set.

Despite the tendency to increase, the activity rate of women amounting to 44.7% is much lower than that of men which amounted to 68.8% in the year of 2011, and shows the great gender gap of 24.1 percentage points in the participation rate. What is characteristic of the Republic of Macedonia in terms of the unemployment rate is that, in this indicator of labour market, women are in a slightly better position (the unemployment rate among women is 30.8%, whereas, among men, it is 31.8%).

The rural areas are still faced with high unemployment rate, and unreliable and low income. The activity rate among the population over 15 years of age according to the type of residence shows double disparities which indicate the very low activity rate of women from rural areas and great disparities in terms of the activity rates of women and of men from rural areas, as well as disparities between women from rural and women from urban areas. According to **the economic status**, in the year of 2011 women were represented with 24.8% out of the total number of employers in the employers category (75.2% were men), 17.9% in the category of employees for own account out of the total number of persons in this category (as opposed to the 82.1% of men). In contrast, the share of women in the category of unpaid family workers is 61.7 %. These data indicate a more constant state in the active population and its division by gender. The numbers confirm the traditional image of lower representation of women in paid jobs, and highest representation in unpaid work in the home and family, that is to say, in the unpaid labour.

Numerous projects in the field of labour market and equal opportunities have been implemented thus far, aimed at supporting, that is, **encouraging entrepreneurship among women**, via programme activities and strategic objectives and activities provided in related national documents and operational plans, which resulted in progress made in the situation regarding the inclusion of women in the self-employed category. As for the civil society, an important role in the enhancement of the position of women in the labour market is also assumed by the bodies of the bipartite and tripartite **social dialogue in the Republic of Macedonia**, that is to say, the trade unions and the employers' organisations on one side, and the Government on the other.

What is characteristic regarding this issue within the trade unions and employers' organisations is that gender issues are not found on the main agendas of employers' organisations and trade unions, but, rather, they are treated as marginal issues.

In connection with the issue of women and prevention of violence, it can be noted that numerous activities aimed at combating domestic violence and human trafficking of women and children have been undertaken.

A number of activities were undertaken in accordance with the National Strategy for Domestic Violence 2008 – 2011. Numerous campaigns and training sessions were organised for the professional structures working on the issue of domestic violence (namely, the Centres for Social Work, the healthcare institutions, the police, the courts, the educational institutions, and the local self-government and civil sector representatives). Hence, the institutional capacities for dealing with domestic violence have been strengthened. Furthermore, by establishing the extra-institutional forms of protection, the service for protection of victims were also improved. The trends of reporting domestic violence have increased in the past several years. In the year of 2011, a total of 593 crimes committed in domestic violence were registered, which shows an increase by 23.3% in comparison to the year of 2010. Additionally, usually the most common act is “bodily injury”, specifically, in 70% of the total number of registered offences labelled as domestic violence. The most common perpetrators of these crimes are husbands (216 persons) and sons (77 persons), whilst the remaining categories are present in much smaller numbers.

A total of 600 perpetrators have been reported for the committed crimes, out of which 550, or about 92%, were men, and only 50 were women. The most common victims of domestic violence were women, namely 507 of the victims were women and 105 were men.

During this period, the police acted upon 4,609 complaints about domestic violence. Most of the complaints, namely 3,090, refer to psychological harassment expressed through verbal threats and insults, as well as by using derogatory words, humiliation, blackmailing and by throwing out of the home. The complaints were filed against 3,970 male persons and 719 female persons.

The Republic of Macedonia is one of the first countries from the region that have signed the Convention of the Council of Europe on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. This presents an important step, given that the Convention is the first legally binding international document that specifically addressed violence against women.

Furthermore, the problem of human trafficking, especially of women and girls, was in the focus of the activities of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in the past years. The commitment and efforts to combat this contemporary evil are evident in the adoption of the separate National Strategy and National Action Plan.

The Office of the National Mechanism for Referral of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings has been functioning within the Department for Equal Opportunities at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy since the year of 2005; the Office, in cooperation with the Centres for Social Work, provides coordinated assistance and protection of human trafficking victims, especially of women and children.

The Standard Operating Procedures for Treatment of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings were prepared in 2007, and were adopted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in 2010. The objective of the Standard Operating Procedures is to provide assistance and protection to all victims of trafficking in human beings via a comprehensive approach based on the human rights of the victims; the Standard Operating Procedures contain specific measures that refer to children victims of trafficking in human beings.

The issue of protection of children victims of trafficking in human beings was regulated for the first time in the Republic of Macedonia in 2008 in the Law on Family, in which a new chapter was added, namely, Chapter V-a: "Custody of Minors - Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings". The amendments to the Law on Protection of Children in 2009 raised the level of protection of children, and in June of 2009 the Law on Social Protection was adopted, in which provisions that enable the protection of victims of trafficking in human beings and the establishment of the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings were included. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy adopted a Rulebook on the norms and standards for the premises, equipment, professional staff and resources necessary for the establishment and commencement of functioning of social protection institutions – Centres for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings.

Via the amendments to the Criminal Code of 2008 and 2009, the national criminal legislation for combating trafficking in human beings was harmonised with the ratified international conventions and the European legislation. In April of 2009, the Republic of Macedonia ratified the **Convention of the Council of Europe on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**.

During the year of 2011, a system for collecting statistical data on victims of trafficking in human beings was established at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in order to monitor the trend of this phenomenon without collecting and processing victims' personal data, which ensures maximum protection of victims' identity and other personal data. The state shelter centre, that is, the Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, was opened on 28 January 2011. The Centre accommodates victims of trafficking in human beings who are citizens of the

Republic of Macedonia, as well as foreigners who have obtained permit for temporary residence.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

When activities for educating the public and raising the awareness regarding the importance of particular issues are undertaken, the efforts to achieve certain social values always produce positive results. In this respect, it has to be emphasised that the media are of critical importance to each democratic society, since they, being the creators of public opinion, assist in the creation or rejection of certain stereotypes and prejudices. And, unfortunately, stereotypes and prejudices are part of our everyday lives. For that reason, the past few years were devoted to taking steps towards appropriate presentation of women in the media.

Furthermore, the Broadcasting Council of the Republic of Macedonia monitors the compliance with the provisions of the Law on Broadcasting Activity which cover aspects related to the treatment of gender issues. The Council performs monitoring upon complaints from citizens as well as on its own initiative. If found that the Law has been violated, the Council, in accordance with its competences, imposes measures on the broadcasters that violated the Law.

In December of 2007, the Broadcasting Council established the Coordination Body for Advertising, Tele-Shopping and Sponsorship. The objective behind the establishment of this body was to open a wider discussion regarding the extent to which broadcasters comply with the standards and principles established by Law, as well as to turn the attention to the sensitivity of gender equality.

Since the year of 2009, the Broadcasting Council has collected data on the gender structure of the employees in the media. The percentage of women employed in the electronic media shows that they constitute about 40% of the total number of employees.

Furthermore, the fact that the Sessions of the Assembly's Committee on Equal Opportunities that are broadcasted on the Assembly's Channel greatly contributes to the presentation of the issue of gender equality has been positively evaluated.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

Women assume an important and significant role in all spheres of the Macedonian society. The establishment of gender-conscious peace and security policy derives from the need to respond to the challenges and risks that undermine

the status of women or marginalise their role in a state of crises and conflicts, post-conflict situations, and in peace building.

The Republic of Macedonia, being an active international actor, is committed to the implementation of the gender perspective in the foreign policy and national security and defence policy, by strengthening the active role of women and achieving gender equality.

With the adoption of the Law on Equal Opportunities, the issues of interest to equal opportunities, including security and defence, were laid down.

In order to effectively approach the implementation of the recommendations from Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy initiated the preparations and adoption of the National Action Plan for Implementation of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in January of this year.

This document defines the political guidelines, principles, competent authorities, activities, strategies, indicators, monitoring and evaluation processes, and the financial implications for the implementation of the National Action Plan.

Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

I would like to use this opportunity to inform you that the Republic of Macedonia also works seriously on the preparations for accession into the European Union, by drawing its institutions and legislation closer to the European Union standards. Special attention is paid to the corpus of issues from the field of human rights and freedoms, as well as equal opportunities for all citizens. In this respect, the Republic of Macedonia will continue to perform focused work in the field of gender equality, since we are well aware that the real democratisation of the country would not be possible without complete and unhindered inclusion of both women and men on a fully equal basis in all social trends.

I also wish to use this opportunity to emphasise the active and successful cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and the United Nations and its agencies, particularly those present in the country, which I hope will continue in the future.

At the very end of this presentation, I would like to introduce the members of the Macedonian delegation. I hope that we will be able to provide complete and competent answers to any questions you have through the dialogue that follows.

Thank you very much.