

Commission on the Status of Women  
Forty-ninth session  
New York, 28 February – 11 March 2005

PANEL I

Ms. Chairperson, Madam High Commissioner, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman, NGO representatives, dear friends:

It is a great honour and privilege for me to participate at this milestone session of the CSW and particularly at this panel that focuses on the synergies between national implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

I am above all glad that the format of this panel provides for equal participation of the representatives of women's NGOs from two countries that will present their national experience in the implementation of the CEDAW and the BPA.

I remember while I was serving as the Chairperson of the CSW's last session in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first session in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (44<sup>th</sup> in 2000 and 45<sup>th</sup> in 2001), I tried to integrate statements of representatives of NGOs in the plenary and panel discussions as much as possible and not to have them only at the end of the list. A shortage of time was our main obstacle in achieving that. The full integration of NGOs perspectives in the CSW deliberations is of utmost importance and deserves the further consideration of this Commission's ongoing improvement of its working methods.

The format of today's panel is the right step in that direction, providing equal treatment for NGO representatives and enabling us to share experiences and good practices, as well as to share our views on the remaining challenges of implementation of the CEDAW Convention and the BPA. I am fully aware that Ms. Sanja Sarnavka's NGO perspective on this topic will probably be different than mine. Is a glass of water half empty - or half full?

For the NGO representatives it is probably half empty, for me it is half full. Both perspectives are essential to get us to the real picture of progress and obstacles in achieving gender equality. We must keep in mind that we share the same final goal and that we use our gender lenses to move the women's agenda forward.

I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Sanja Sarnavka and the Croatian NGO B.a.B.e. for the recent approval of their consultative status before the ECOSOC that will give them more visibility in their future work at the UN and particularly before the CSW.

Ps) 3. 84766 (The CSW Standards) - 3.184.766-(13) BJE3DAm-28420(m) m0. 488281 (r) O. 48828

The CEDAW Convention is a much older instrument, adopted 26 years ago as a legally binding human rights treaty that identifies legislative and other appropriate measures required to ensure women's right to equality and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are much younger instruments, adopted 10 years ago as comprehensive policies that provide measures, actions and implementation strategies, such as gender mainstreaming, for the advancement of women.

From the standard setting point we can see that both instruments have been further developed by the adoption of additional instruments aimed at their better implementation.

The Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention, adopted in 1999, and entered into force in 2000, provides through the complaint and inquiry procedure protection of the rights set forth by the Convention at the international level.

The Outcome document of the UNGASS "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" adopted in 1995 added on 199 actions to be taken at the national and international level for

## Short introduction of Croatia

The Republic of Croatia is a central European country, with around 4.5 million inhabitants, beautifully placed at the Mediterranean sea, but with a very complicated history, which I do not intend to explain more than necessary to give you a context – a setting of when and how Croatia started to implement the CEDAW and the BPA as a newly independent country.

Today I am expressing my personal views that are based on experiences gained during the past 11 years of my work in this field in many different capacities. During these challenging years for the promotion and protection of women's rights I have had a privilege to participate and tried to contribute to many important events as a representative of my country at the international level and as a civil servant at the national level.

The Republic of Croatia proclaimed its independence in 1991, and began to build a state based on a political democracy, market economy, the rule of law and protection of human rights. Until 1998, Croatia's state and institution-building efforts as well as democratic and economic transition occurred under difficult conditions due to wartime aggression and its struggle to achieve territorial integrity, to resolve the problems of a large number of refugees, displaced and missing persons and all the other problems brought by war destruction.

## Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

In 1994 as the Head of the Department for Human Rights of MFA I was deeply involved in national preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

We established the Working Group for the preparation of the Fourth World Conference on Women that produced the National Report on the Status of Women in the Republic of Croatia in 1994. That was a very important assessment of the de jure and de facto status of women in the Republic of Croatia. At that time political participation of women was very low, only 5.4 per cent which was a significant decline compared to 16 per cent in 1990, which was a result of the quota system used by the Croatia's predecessor state the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Let me quote some of the assessments made at that time:

"In Croatia there is no state institution which systematically deals with the question of the status of women in society, there are not enough educated professionals in this field, nor any research institution. The main precondition for a successful implementation of the process of transition is the full inclusion of women in this process. In order to do this, it is necessary to have institutions, legal framework, mechanisms for the implementation of decisions on improving the status of women, and basic knowledge of every individual about promotion and integration of women

into economic, political, and social life of the country in transition.

**That first national policy was later proved to be a little more than a list of wishes.**

to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and recommended a set of measures for implementation. I will mention only those relevant to our topic today.

In its Concluding Comments the Committee pointed out that, in order to increase the visibility of gender issues and to promote a gender-sensitive national agenda, it is crucial to incorporate gender in all discussions of equality.

close collaboration with non-governmental organizations. It estimates the current situation and contains concrete measures with a time frame and responsible actors for their implementation.

Positive development is also visible in women's participation in political life that has been consistently increasing since its first decline in the 1990s when it was 5-7 per cent. The 22 per cent of women in the Parliament puts Croatia above the European average and is higher than previously imposed by quotas in the former SFRY that was 16 per cent. This is a clear reversal of a negative trend into a positive trend. Changes were achieved through public debate, the adoption of various laws and strategies, including