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(C) OAW/C/IRL/4-5) at its 693rd and 694th meetings.

Introduction by the State party

2. In introducing the report, the representative emphasized that the State party attached to the Convention, its review process and the recommendations of the Committee. Major changes in the country included recent economic prosperity and related increases in spending on education, health and social services, as well as a surge in employment and immigration.

Women's employment had increased considerably and stood at 56 per cent in 2004, aided by higher demand for labour, legislative changes in relation to parental leave, tax reform, the development and funding of a childcare infrastructure, and improvements in women's education. While a gender pay gap persists,

Owing to the increased focus on the education of girls, women now constituted the majority of graduates in many fields at the tertiary level, and girls outperformed boys at the national baccalaureate. The number of women in full-time education was higher than that of men. Despite those successes, women remained underrepresented in the engineering and technology sectors and in senior education management positions. Strategies and initiatives for increasing their numbers in those fields were under consideration, as were ways to support female teachers wishing to enter administrative and management roles.

5. Women were increasingly visible in decision-making forums, including the current and former presidents, the deputy prime minister, three Cabinet members and three of eight Supreme Court judges. Based on a recent decision by the Government, future nominations to State boards and committees would have to include both women and men so that the 40 per cent target could be met. Targets

were also being pursued in the civil service. By law, seven of the fifteen members of the Irish Human Rights Commission were women. However, the number of women in decision-making positions remained significantly below desirable levels in many areas of the public and private sectors, including electoral politics. The Government has provided funding to political parties to increase the number of women

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

12. The Committee commends the State party for its combined fourth and fifth periodic report, which was submitted in accordance with the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of reports. It also commends the State party for the frank oral presentation and written replies to questions posed by the Committee's pre-session working group, which provided additional information on the implementation of the Convention.

13. The Committee commends the State party for its delegation, headed by the Minister of State of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, and composed of representatives of different departments with expertise in a broad range of areas covered by the Convention. The Committee appreciates the openness and seriousness of the constructive dialogue that took place between the delegation and the members of the Committee.

14. The Committee commends the State party for the withdrawal of the reservations to articles 15 (3) and 13 (b) and (c).

15. The Committee welcomes the regular consultation procedures with civil society institutions and the State party's recognition of the contribution that non-governmental organizations make towards achieving gender equality and the value that it places on their work.

Positive aspects

16. The Committee notes with appreciation that, since the consideration of its combined second and third periodic report (CEDAW/C/IRL/2-3) in 1999, the State party has enacted the Equal Status Act, 2000 and the Equality Act, 2004, the latter amending both the 2000 Act and the Employment Equality Act, 1998; the Carer's Leave Act, 2001; the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work)

Principal areas of concern and recommendations

21. The Committee notes the State party's obligation regarding the systematic and continuing implementation of all the provisions of the Conventio

and of the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres.

26. The Committee is concerned that, in spite of a large variety of measures and programmes envisaged or already in place, including under the Equality for Women Measure, there seems to be no comprehensive strategic view and framework for the achievement of gender equality in all areas

majority of whom are women, who are excluded from the protection against discrimination extended to employees under the Equality Act, 2004.

37. The Committee recommends that further measures allowing for the reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities be adopted and implemented, including the provision of affordable childcare, and that the equal sharing of domestic and family tasks between women and men be promoted. It also recommends that the State party adopt policies and concrete measures to accelerate the eradication of pay discrimination against women and to work towards ensuring de facto equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market. The Committee calls on the State party to ensure that women domestic workers, including migrant women, are duly protected against

