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Introductory Statement  
by the Head of Delegation of Austria  
H.E. Ambassador Ferdinand Trauttmansdorff

37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against  
Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of  
the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against  
Women

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Madam Chair,  
Distinguished Members of the Committee,  
Distinguished Members of the UN Secretariat,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I consider it an honour and a pleasure to head a delegation that is happy to discuss with you today the sixth periodic report of Austria on the implementation of the CEDAW Convention and to reply to your questions. We believe that there is no country, including Austria, that can rightfully claim to having achieved all goals in gender policies based on the letter and spirit of the CEDAW convention. This encounter with the Committee is, therefore, a highly valuable occasion for us to further improve the Austrian policies on the basis of all the efforts invested and achievements made so far. This Committee clearly assembles the most outstanding expertise, experience and global overview our delegation can draw upon. We will, therefore, try to make optimal use of this meeting with you.

Under normal circumstances, the Austrian Federal Minister for Women's Affairs, Doris Bures would have been glad to head this delegation. Austria's new Federal Government, however, only took office on 11 January 2007. The new Minister is Minister for Women's Affairs will be associated with the Prime Minister's office and is thus particularly well placed to realizing the objectives of Austrian gender policies across the different fields of Governmental policy. Equality of opportunity and equal pay, equality in employment as well as in science and research and the protection of women against violence are among its key concerns.

Permit me, to give you a brief account of some current developments, activities and measures under the overall heading of equality policy in Austria.

Women's job opportunities are to be improved, inter alia, by setting qualitative targets for labour market policies, by increasing the employment rate and notably the full-time employment rate of women as well as the proportion of women in the business and scientific communities, in politics and in the social

partnership structures. Staffing and funding of the Ombud Office for Equality Issues are to be upgraded, while guaranteeing its continued independence.

One of the priority targets is to reduce the pay gap between women and men. In this context I should like to mention, for example, measures to encourage girls in choosing atypical occupations and to upgrade the promotion of apprentices; measures to eliminate stereotypes in job rating aimed at non-discriminatory job evaluation and higher ratings for women-specific jobs; women-specific career advancement and support of those who return to the labour market after maternity leave.

The Austrian Government is determined to fight against female poverty, inter alia, by anchoring a minimum wage of 1 000 Euro in a national, cross-sectoral collective agreement. An action plan, specially designed for the advancement of female immigrants will be drawn up.

Ongoing measures to diminish the conflict between the demands of work and family as well as the involvement of fathers in housework and caring duties need to be enhanced with a view to moving in the direction of a more balanced distribution of these tasks between parents.

With this in mind, child-care benefit provisions will be made more flexible; the additional income ceiling for entitlement will be raised (to 16 200,- euros annually). (The ceiling indicates the maximum amount mothers or fathers may earn while drawing child-care benefit.) Beyond this, determined efforts will be made to step up the quality of child-care facilities and increase the number of such facilities.

Other priority areas are:

- the advancement of women in senior positions (inter alia by raising the proportion of women holding top positions in science and research);
- women's health (e.g. upgrading gender-specific medicine in research, teaching and among practitioners);
- advancement of women through counselling (e.g. setting up more women's counselling services and stepping up women-specific further education);
- protection against violence and violence prevention (e.g. pursuing relevant legislation and providing more funds for violence intervention centres);

- combating trafficking in women and support for affected women (for example, upgrading emergency accommodation; action plan against human trafficking).

### **Current equality policy developments in Austria**

We are aware that Austria is no exception in having to admit that women are still being discriminated against, even though equality has been established by law. Hence, our policy-makers must and will focus on further improvements and seek to progressively achieve de facto equality.

### **Equal treatment**

The equal treatment of women and men in employment is mandatory in Austria under two equal treatment acts (Equal Treatment Act for the Private Sector 1979 and Act on Equal Treatment in Federal Service 1993). The equal treatment acts provide for women to realise their rights, inter alia, with the support and advice of bodies set up under the equal treatment law, such as the Ombud Office for Equality Issues and equal treatment officers. Other relevant law enforcement institutions are the Equal Treatment Commissions and the Labour Court. The legal basis for equal treatment was further improved by far-reaching amendments of Austria's equal treatment law in 2004 implementing EU-legislation.

A new brochure entitled "Your Legitimate Right", which is now also available in English, contains comprehensive information on equal treatment and equality of women and men as well as the complete text of the Equal Treatment Act. I have brought along a few copies which I should like to make available to you.

The law also provides for periodic evaluations of the progress made in implementing equality and equal treatment in both the public and the private sectors and for subsequent reports to Parliament.

### **Gender Mainstreaming: integrating the equality perspective in all policy areas**

For the purpose of implementing the gender mainstreaming strategy at the Federal level, an **inter-ministerial working group for gender mainstreaming** was set up in the **summer of 2000**. It is chaired by the

Federal Minister responsible for women's issues and includes representatives of all ministries and relevant top-level institutions.

**The objective of the working group** is to support and to accompany the gender mainstreaming process in all ministries at all political levels. The working group is primarily tasked with facilitating exchange of information including best-practice initiatives in the ministries and domestic as well as foreign best-practice examples; with designing criteria for the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies; and with monitoring and evaluating the application of gender-mainstreaming objectives to current projects, measures and legislation.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, another **government decision was taken on gender mainstreaming**, on 9 March 2004, which followed up previous decisions by providing for the vigorous implementation of gender mainstreaming at the Federal level.

In addition to a number of important measures, the government decision included the following priority objectives: to press ahead with implementing the gender mainstreaming strategy, with special emphasis on introducing gender budgeting to analyse budgetary measures for their impact on women and/or men, to set up internal steering groups and to run specific projects in the ministries.

In order to implement gender budgeting, a pilot study on "The Application of Gender Budgeting to the Drugs Budget" was commissioned in the **Federal Ministry for Health and Women's Issues**. The objective of the study is the application of the principle of gender mainstreaming to the ministry's drug budget. The study explains the steps to be taken and will also serve as a model for other ministries. The idea is to pass on the results to all the ministries and to establish the appropriate status of gender budgeting already at the early stages of budget planning.

### **Gender Mainstreaming in health care**

Women's health is a vital concern – not least on account of the express demand by the WHO to pay urgent attention to the health of women. Austria was among the first European countries to comply with this demand in issuing the 1<sup>st</sup> Austrian Women's Health Report in 1995.

There are health risks and diseases that affect only women or have a more lasting or serious impact on women than on men.

There are also differences in access to and the use of health services between women and men.

Further measures are, therefore, conditional on gathering key indicators relevant to health planning as well as gender disaggregated health statistics. With this in mind, emphasis was placed on disaggregating the available data and to introduce a global perspective by comparing them with EU and non-EU figures, when drawing up the 2<sup>nd</sup> Austrian Health Report published in 2005.

Recently, a **guideline** was published for **the implementation of gender mainstreaming in hospitals**. The guideline was designed to ensure the sustainable integration of gender mainstreaming in the management tools of hospitals and the formulation of gender mainstreaming goals to guarantee the routine application of gender mainstreaming principles in service delivery (gender-equitable medicine and care) as well as in staffing and organisational development.

### **Gender Mainstreaming and education**

Austrian policy takes care of the fact that gender mainstreaming is also important in the area of education. **Co-education**, the integrated education of girls and boys, which has been mandatory for all state schools since 1975, has won full acceptance at Austrian schools.

Since the eighties, the co-educative approach has been a focus of discussions that were stimulated by research studies and has led to some new developments.

However, educational policies are **not** being realigned towards renewed gender separation by abolishing co-education and setting up separate schools for girls or for boys. The trend is much rather towards retaining integrated education while reforming co-education.

The **introduction of an educational principle** under the heading "Education for Equality of Women and Men" into all types of schools in 1994/1995 (including accompanying measures, such as the dissemination of information material and continued training for teachers) is supposed to support ongoing efforts to establish a new co-educative practice. The quest for new forms of co-education

as part of a “new learning culture” implies that engagement with gender differences and ways of addressing them are deliberately taken up in class teaching. Gender-specific work with boys who are confronting their male role is vital in this approach. A critical perspective on co-education and corresponding adjustments to class teaching may benefit both girls and boys. Let me give you an example: Studies have been showing just as girls are affected by the predominant focus of boys on the field of technology, boys are often affected by the superior performance of girls in reading and modern languages.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are also a guiding principle for the **Austrian Development Cooperation**, as stipulated by the relevant Act of 2002/03. The overarching goal of poverty elimination cannot be achieved without a special focus on women. The Austrian Development Cooperation has also formed its strategies for gender equality in accordance with the three interrelated pillars of development, human rights and security, stressed in the report “In larger Freedom” by the Secretary General. Targeted programmes and projects as well as mainstreaming into all areas of development policy through a gender assessment are the tools employed.

One area I want to highlight in this context is the implementation of **Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)**: Austria is currently supporting an important programme by UNIFEM in South Eastern Europe that facilitates bilateral and sub-regional consultations among women in political decision-making positions. It also supports civil society groups in their monitoring and advocacy work in peace and reconstruction processes in the region. In 2007 Austria is supporting similar efforts in Africa. Security Council resolution 1325 also requires action on a national level. Austria is therefore currently working on a National Action Plan: the aims are to increase the number of women participating in peace operations of the EU, OSCE and the UN. Training of all persons involved in peace missions needs to be improved, including at the political level. The new government programme emphasizes the active role of women at all stages of a peace process as well as higher numbers of women in peace missions.

Security also means freedom from **violence**: consistent with the domestic policy focus on efforts to eliminate violence against women, Austria has supported the Secretary General’s Study on violence against women. We are looking forward to see that efforts started with this Study be followed up in the new gender entity that will be created in the ongoing reform process.

## **Equality policies – priority setting during Austria’s EU Presidency in 2006:**

During the Austrian EU Presidency in the first half of 2006, Austria also set its own priorities in the field of gender equality:

Implementing the **Beijing Platform for Action** within the European Union, Austria formulated indicators for women and health which were adopted by the Council of EU-Ministers in June 2006. Women’s health was also the key topic at the meeting of EU health ministers.

Conscious of the persisting **pay gap** between men and women in the EU member countries, Austria together with the EU Commission organised a conference of experts in May 2006 under the heading “Closing the Gender Pay Gap”, which was the first conference ever to gather all the social partners at the European level.

In the framework of the **EU’s human rights policy**, Austria carried out a campaign to highlight and support the work of **women human rights defenders**. Women human rights defenders face increased risks as their work does frequently not correspond with traditional gender patterns. EU-Presidency representatives around the world, including at a high political level met with women human rights defenders to hear about their activities and their needs.

### **Violence against women**

At this point I should like to draw your attention to a number of measures taken in the period under review to improve the protection of women against violence in its various forms.

As regards protection against **domestic violence** mention should be made of two amendments of the Protection Against Violence Act and of far-reaching penal law amendments which **strengthened**, inter alia, **the protection of minors against sexual abuse** and which removed **differentiation between** rape and sexual coercion within and outside marriage or cohabitation.

Since 1 January 2006, victims of violence, of dangerous threats and sexual offences have, moreover, been entitled by law to psychosocial and court\_ assistance services in penal proceedings against the perpetrators. This has made a major contribution to reducing the emotional stress imposed on victims



involved in proceedings against their relatives, to preventing secondary traumatisations and to strengthening victims' rights.

A long-standing demand by victim protection services was met on 1 July 2006, when the requirement for victims' consent to the prosecution of perpetrators also in cases of dangerous threats within the family was removed.

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 marked the entry into force of a new criminal provision which penalises **stalking** thus making an explicit statement that this form of psychological pressure is not tolerated.

Millions of women throughout the world fall victim to **harmful traditional practices**, such as forced marriages, genital mutilation and honour killings. Improving the situation of these women is our special concern and has prompted us to launch an initiative against harmful traditional practices bringing together Austria's Ministers for Foreign Affairs, for the Interior, for Justice, Education, Social Security and Generations, all of whom were hitherto women. Thanks to this initiative, concrete measures were taken at the legislative level and in other areas.

### **Measures against trafficking in women**

The crime of human trafficking affects all European states as countries of origin, transit or destination. Human trafficking is the third-biggest source of income for transnational criminal networks after arms smuggling and drug trafficking.

Determined steps designed to prevent and to combat this crime are, therefore, of vital importance. With this in mind, Austria made the fight against human trafficking one of the priorities of its EU Council Presidency.

Just before the Austrian Presidency ended, an expert conference on the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking was organised in cooperation with the European Commission in Brussels on 28/29 June 2006.

In the amendment to the Penal Code in 2004, Austria had already enshrined a new, general and comprehensive penal provision against human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, removal of organs and labour exploitation. Austria has thereby transformed all the international acts on the mandatory criminalisation of human trafficking into Austrian domestic law.

The Austrian residence and settlement law, too, takes account of the special need for the protection of victims.

During penal proceedings, victims of human trafficking who are, as a rule, exposed to exceptional emotional stress, are entitled to psychosocial and court assistance services.

Austria has been the driving force behind the so called COSPOL project for effectively combating human trafficking. In the coming months, the pertinent operational and strategic action plans will be jointly drawn up with Europol and other European countries involved.

With reference to the measures already listed in Austria's 6th periodic report in response to **Recommendation 228, Measures against Trafficking in Women**, I should like to mention that additional measures have in the meantime been taken at the national level. On 9 November 2004, the government set up an interministerial "Task Force on Human Trafficking", which is chaired by the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs and tasked with coordinating the activities of all the ministries concerned, bringing national and international developments up for discussion and generating solutions

To this end the Task Force drafted a National Action Plan against Human Trafficking and in particular against trafficking in women and children, which will be adopted shortly.

Austria is a state party to all pertinent, international acts against human trafficking, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

In this context I should like to draw special attention to the fact that Austria was one of the first EU countries to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of May 2005 as early as in June 2006.

In order to implement our commitment regarding the prevention of trafficking as well as the protection of victims, the **Austrian Development Cooperation** is providing roughly 5 Mio. Euros over the next 3 years for projects regarding trafficking in women and girls.

### **Women in decision making positions**

Let me now turn to the area of women in decision making. The number of women in economic and political centres of decision-making is a yardstick for de-facto gender equality. With the exception of the Scandinavian countries, the EU member states are still far from equal representation of women and men in such

positions. A study conducted by the Ministry for Women's Issues and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber on Austrian enterprises has revealed that just 16 % of enterprises with more than 50 employees are headed by female managing directors and 3% of companies with an executive board have women in these leading positions. In just under 83% of all respondent enterprises at least one woman holds a top position. The total number of businesswomen who manage their own enterprises in Austria is roughly 100 000 or 31.4 %. In 1996, the proportion of women managers of start-up companies was 27 %, today, 10 years later, the proportion has risen to 38 %.

Even though progress has been registered in the participation of both genders in business, executive positions have remained a male domain.

This cannot be attributed to an insufficient number of women with excellent training, but rather to the persisting **traditional role model**, in part to a lack of opportunities to reconcile work and family life. This is also due to insufficient support to women applicants by people inside or outside companies during the recruitment process and during the initial stages of their careers. It is thus vital and one of our major concerns to complement the 'old boy networks' with mechanisms that benefit, connect and support women pursuing their careers. Two years ago, a cross-mentoring programme was launched in the public sector at the federal level and has since been expanded to the level of the Provinces; similarly, a business mentoring project and a cross-mentoring programme were set up and supported in the private sector. All of them have proved effective and are to be extended.

If engrained role images are to be softened and stereotypes overcome, it is essential to raise awareness among young girls and to assist them in making the right career choice by making them aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Together with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber the Institute for Educational Research has developed a free-of-charge "talent check" for girls to sound out their inclinations and interests. This awareness raising drive is to be underpinned by a poster campaign at schools under the heading "Girls can do more"

### **Upgrading data acquisition and disaggregation by gender**

Regarding the upgrading of data acquisition and disaggregation of gender a report titled "Gender-specific Disparities" was published in 2002. It gives an

account of disparities in the following areas: demographic structures /life styles, education, gainful employment, income/standard of living, health, leisure time, division of labour in the family/support by institutions, EU comparison. This was followed by the report "Women in Austria 2003–2006", a collection of all the reports published in the period under review that address the circumstances of women living in Austria.

The first part of the report "Women in Austria", which is already off the press, contains inter alia:

- 6th Austrian Report to the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 2004
- Women's Health Report, 2005
- Women in Decision Making Positions in Austria, 2006

The comprehensive report on "Women and Men in Austria" as well as other reports are supposed to be published in the second part of the Women in Austria report.

Distinguished members of the Committee, these **examples of current Austrian policies in the field of women and equality** are intended to demonstrate that efforts to dismantle discrimination against women have continued apace since we put together our last report, which is being discussed today.

Together with the experts in my delegation, I shall now be happy to provide answers to any detailed questions you may have concerning the measures taken by the Austrian Federal Government to abolish discrimination against women set out in the 6<sup>th</sup> CEDAW Report.