

1 (1)

**United Nations Forum on Minority Issues**  
**Fourth Session – “Guaranteeing the rights of minority women”**

“National practices and experiences:  
positive measures/ affirmative action and role models”

Geneva, 29 – 30 November 2011

**Statement by Austria**

Mme Chair,

We welcome the focus of the discussion on national practices and experiences with regard to the rights of minority women and girls. We consider this exchange of information on national laws, policies and practices that have been developed to foster the rights of minority women and their impact on the full enjoyment of the rights of minority women and their empowerment as an important opportunity to raise the level of awareness of the particular situation and needs of minority women worldwide.

Minority women in Austria belong either to the legally recognized autochthonous ethnic groups and enjoy special rights with regard to protecting and promoting their own languages and culture or they belong to the group of immigrants who are in a quite different situation with specific challenges and needs which require appropriate support programmes to facilitate integration.

Based on the universal right to equality before the law and protection against discrimination, an extensive set of anti-discrimination legislation is in force both on federal and provincial level which is continuously being enhanced and reinforced. Consequently, female immigrants and women belonging to the autochthonous ethnic groups in Austria have legal means at their disposal to deal with discrimination with the support of the Ombudsperson for Equal Treatment and the Equal Treatment Commission. And both groups benefit from gender equality programmes.

Mme Chair,

A National Plan of Action on Integration was adopted in January 2010 designed to promote and facilitate integration of people with migration background and aimed at inter alia addressing the specific needs of minority girls and women. The Action Plan

is mainly implemented by the newly established State Secretariat for Integration which sets its priorities within the following fields of activities: Language/Education, Work/Employment, Rule of Law and Values, Health and Social Issues, Intercultural Dialogue, Sport/Recreation and Living/regional Dimension of Integration.

Minority women and girls often experience multiple forms of discrimination and are of victims of violence. Therefore, the protection of victim of violence has been considerably expanded and improved in our country. A network of intervention centers has been established across the country and restrictions to gain a residence permit for victims of domestic violence, especially in the case of forced marriages, were eased. Austria has also taken effective measures to combat human trafficking. Victims of human trafficking may be granted a residence permit valid for at least six months and may be included in a witness-protection programme. A special care institution called „Drehscheibe“ has been set up for minor victims. NGOs like LEFÖ are being supported by the Government to assist victims of human trafficking throughout Austria.

Mme Chair,

In nearly all priority areas concerning asylum and integration matters, women-specific aspects are being taken into account. Numerous projects aiming at facilitating the integration of immigrant women are supported by the Government. The Austrian Integration Fund and the AMS job market service are conducting a wide range of programmes for the integration of migrants into Austrian society and the labor market, with a special focus on counseling and support for women.

I thank you for your attention.