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Forum on Minority Issues, Fourth Session
29-30 November 2011
Statement by Norway

6. National practices and experiences: positive measures/affirmative action and role models

Madame Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this opportunity to present some of the Norwegian policies on the rights of minority women.

The protection against discrimination in Norwegian law covers discrimination on several grounds - such as gender, ethnicity, descent, skin colour, language, religion and disability.

The importance of including a multidimensional perspective on equality and discrimination is recognised by Norwegian authorities. This means that the different forms of discrimination must be seen in relation with each other. We appreciate and support the independent expert in the efforts on bringing these issues on the agenda.

The Norwegian Government has appointed a commission that is given the task to consider how people's life cycle, ethnicity and class should be part of gender equality policies. The commission is asked to focus on how future gender equality policies should take into consideration the diversity of society - such as immigration, religion, age and various social groups. The commission has suggested a provision on discrimination on multiple grounds.

The new Action plan for gender equality is the first action plan on gender in twenty years. The plan introduces several interesting measures. I would like to draw your attention to some of them:

- For instance, a project that aims at improving immigrant women's access to information about their legal rights. The Government acknowledges that there is a need for increased efforts to ensure that immigrant women can enjoy their rights according to Norwegian law. For instance rights concerning marriage, personal economy, working conditions and protection against violence. Civil society is important in this respect.
- Several measures are directed towards involving men. We believe that men have an important part to play in gender equality policies. Therefore, the action plan introduces measures which include all men, also men with an immigrant background and men of Sami descent.

I would like to finalise by pointing out that one of the main challenges, I think for all of us, concerns the need for more knowledge about the situation for minority women, and the art and scope of discrimination on multiple grounds. We must bear in mind that women's rights also interact with ethnicity, social class and the role of men. Minority women's situation interacts with their position in both minority and majority contexts. This holistic approach is important in all areas of equality and anti-discrimination work.

Thank you.