

## Women's and Migrants Rights Issues Dominate UPR of Andorra

16.11.2010

Andorra was represented by a delegation of seven persons, headed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Institutional Relations, Mr Xavier Espot, at its universal periodic review (UPR) on 3 November 2010. All States wishing to speak during the review were able to do so and in fact, the review ended an hour ahead of schedule as only 22 States took the floor during the review.

Andorra gave a detailed presentation on the rights of foreigners in the State. The delegation spoke of reductions in the amount of time required to obtain citizenship, from 20 years to 15 which had benefited 6% of the country's population. Other achievements mentioned by the State included the introduction of unemployment benefits, expansion of trade union rights, and the introduction, in April 2010, of an equality action plan.

States acknowledged the constraints faced by Andorra as a consequence of its limited size and potential lack of resources in terms of personnel available to undertake new policies and accede to new treaties. While some States offered encouragement for Andorra's attempts to address gender inequality, they recognised that a number of obstacles remain. The Netherlands was concerned about the illegality of abortion, even for victims of rape. States also expressed concern over the continued disparity in wages between men and women, with many recommending that legislation be approved to end inequality between the sexes in Andorra.[1] The Andorran delegation responded by ensuring that steps were being taken in the area of women's rights, including attempts to increase the representation of women in public posts. Andorra also encouraged civil society to get involved in the ongoing debate about women's equality and help bring about improvements. However, the delegation insisted that there would be no policy changes on access to abortion in the near future, explaining that the right to life was enshrined in the constitution, which there were no plans to review.

The lack of concrete legislation on corporal punishment in Andorra was also raised, with Sweden suggesting that Andorra should 'fully implement' the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Indeed, several States recommended that Andorra ratify international human rights treaties that it is not yet a party to, in particular the optional protocol to the *Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. [2] In its responses, Andorra stated that the reason it had not ratified more international treaties was simply due to a lack of resources, a common problem for many small, independent States.

States also brought up the situation of migrant workers in Andorra, recommending that it recognise the rights of migrants to equal access to healthcare in its constitution.[3] Andorra announced new measures to expand migrant rights, such as the introduction of Portuguese language in certain first and secondary schools. Such moves nonetheless appeared to be more the exception than the rule, with Andorra's delegation avoiding any major commitments. States made 55 recommendations to Andorra, of which it accepted 24 and pledged to consider 29. Disappointingly, it rejected recommendations to grant migrants the right to vote in national elections, and equal rights to receive healthcare and education.

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[1] Argentina, Azerbaijan, China, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, UK. However, very few recommendations offered concrete suggestions and potential solutions.

[2] Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, Mexico, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain.

[3] Brazil, Canada, Sweden, US.