

Final version

**Implementation of  
the Beijing Platform for Action**

Response to a questionnaire submitted by  
the Government of Iceland

**The Ministry of Social Affairs**

## Part One

### Overview of trends in achieving gender equality and women's advancement

1. Immediately after the UN's Beijing Conference, or at the end of November/beginning December 1995, the Icelandic authorities and the Nordic Council of Ministers organized a conference attended by representatives from the Nordic and Baltic countries on how they could further unite their efforts. The conference was important and did support a special gender equality cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries.

The objectives of the Icelandic authorities in gender equality are set forth in a four-year plan of action for gender equality. A decision was made on the government's implementation of the BPA being within the framework of the Icelandic plan of action for gender equality. Upon the revision of the Icelandic action plan from 1993-1997, work was launched on integrating the objectives set forth in the BPA in the new four-year national action plan on gender equality. The Icelandic parliament, the Althingi, passed the new four year plan, which applies to the period 1998-2002, on 8 May 1998 as a parliamentary resolution, according to law.

In November 1998, the Minister of Social Affairs established a committee to follow up the four year plan of action. Two members of the committee come from the two government parties; one from the Ministry of Social Affairs and the fourth member is the director of the Equal Status Council.

The articles in the Icelandic government's plan of action, which are rooted in the BPA or are supported with a reference to the BPA, will be addressed in the following text. The plan of action's format is such that each governmental minister undertakes to work on certain projects under the umbrella of his/her ministry, as well as working on projects, which the government decides to be jointly carried out.

Note that the listing is not based on the weight or priority of projects:

#### Projects of the government

The guideline of the government's plan of action is for the views of gender equality being integrated into all factors of policy formulation, decisions and measures by the state. The focus is on the formal or legal equality in the daily lives and work of both sexes. Additionally, it is pointed out that the equal rights and status of the genders cannot be ensured through governmental measures alone, i.e., solidarity is necessary between non-governmental organization (NGOs), the news media, and the employers and labor unions alike.

### **1. Gender-specifying all statistics**

The governmental ministries and the state institutions will receive a circular introducing a decision by the government to the effect that all statistical information and reports will be specified by gender. The Statistical Bureau of Iceland will collaborate with the state institutions on the execution of this project. The Office for Gender Equality will study the progress of this project two years after the government's action plan takes effect.

### **2. A study will be made on whether public policy formulation is based on gender equality.**

The government will appoint a committee to study whether and how public policy formulation is based on gender equality. At the beginning of its work, the committee will present its frame of work to the government and make proposals on the categories of issues to be specially studied. The committee will launch its work no later than by May 1, 1998. The progress of the committee will then be evaluated and reviewed one year later.

### **3. Gender equality at state institutions**

The management achievement agreement between the ministries and the state institutions will refer in particular to Art. 6 of the Act on the Rights and Duties of Civil Servants, which addresses gender equality, among other things. Additionally, the letters of appointment of the managers of state institutions will emphasize the requirement for the promotion of gender equality in the relevant institutions' operation.

### **4. Women and economic affairs – women and economic power**

A committee will be appointed to present a proposal on a research project regarding the economic power of women and men, and on where such power is embedded in the Icelandic society.

### **The projects of individual governmental ministries**

Each ministry, has agreed to conduct a study on the status of women and men who work in the relevant ministry or its institutions, and to prepare plans on improvements in areas where they are deemed to be necessary. Furthermore, each ministry has agreed on special measures to balance the percentage of the genders on the ministry's committees, boards and councils.

Special projects include a project launched in 1998 on increasing the participation of women in politics, a project on women and power, which includes a research project on the power of women and men and where they lie in society, and a project concerning gender equality in school, aimed against students becoming entrapped in the path of conventional division of duties between the gender. The program also focuses on education for the heads of state institutions and the ministries on gender equality and gender equality programs.

**1. The Prime Minister's Office**

The Prime Minister's Office is responsible for the execution of the government's projects, cf. the above section.

**2. The Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs**

Among projects which the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs is responsible for concern violence against women and courses on the human rights of women.

**3. The Ministry of Social Affairs**

Among projects which the Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for are gender equality evaluation, education on gender equality, increasing the political participation of women, allocation of funds for strengthening employment in rural areas, women refugees, relations between professional and family lives, experimental project on job evaluation, women in search of jobs, treatment for men exercising violence against women and a study on treatment programs for drug addicts.

**4. The Ministry of Finance**

Among projects which the Ministry of Finance is responsible for are regulations on recruitment and wage decisions as well as review of forms.

**5. The Ministry of Health and Social Security**

Among projects which the Ministry of Health and Social Security is responsible for is a committee on future policy in health affairs, review of the standard statistics of social security, special campaign of preventive measures against narcotic and tobacco usage, regulations on research of pharmaceutical products and last but not least a major project on women's health in general.

**6. The Ministries of Industry and Commerce**

Among projects which the Ministries of Industry and Commerce are responsible for are support for women's entrepreneurship, study of the status of women in industry, increasing the number of women in business administration and operation as well as support by the New Business Venture Fund in strengthening women's employment.

**7. The Ministry of Agriculture**

The Ministry will promote full consideration being shown for the position of rural women and women farmers in all of the special target projects carried out under this plan of action and which concern the status of women on the labor market, and the opportunities entailed in their own enterprises and re-education.

**8. The Ministry of Education**

Among projects which the Ministry of Education is responsible for are grants for education about gender equality, the Library of the History of Icelandic Women, Women and the news media – women's and men's images and working towards equality and against conventional work division.

### 9. The Ministry of Fisheries

Among projects which the Ministry of Fisheries is responsible for is women in fish processing and women and entrepreneurship in the fishing industry.

### 10. The Ministry for the Environment

The Ministry has appointed an equal status committee consisting of representatives from the institutions that fall under the ministry's umbrella.

### 11. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Among projects which the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for is women and men working for international organisations and human rights violations against women and girls.

### Bill on a new equal status Act

During the first half of 1999, the Minister of Social Affairs presented a bill on a new equal status Act which is intended to support women's rights as well as men's, as equal status is the goal for both gender. In this regard, special attention was given to international commitments made by Iceland regarding equal status, such as the BPA. The bill was not passed, but will be presented again in the Althingi this fall.

## Part two

### Financial and institutional measures

2. Generally there is no special item of expenditure intended for matters concerning equality in the national budget. It is clear, however, that each Ministry and its institutions spend capital for matters concerning equality, directly or indirectly, even though it is not specifically stated in the national budget. This is in accordance with mainstreaming.

Under the item "the Ministry of Social Affairs" in the national budget, the Equal Status Council which is an institution of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the head of equality, was specially addressed ISK 23,4 in 1995. In 1996 this amount was ISK 27,2 million and in 1999 it was ISK 36,1 million. Besides this the Ministry of Social Affairs spends additional money on equality through other issues falling under the responsibility of the Ministry which concern equality.

- 3.a. A three-year experimental project is taking place on a special women's loan fund under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministries of Commerce and Industry, and Reykjavik City. A study will be made on a regular basis on the fund's objectives and focal points, as well as on how it serves the interests of women. The project will run for one more year.

The Minister of Social Affairs established a cross-party committee with a five-year remit to work on increasing women's participation in politics, for example, through

education, advertising campaigns and publications. The committee has been active since October 1998 but the timetable for the committee is five years.

Last April, an association of women in business was founded. The purpose and intention of the association is to work for women's cooperation and to found a target group facing banks and lending institutions. Networking will be practiced under protection of the association. The government will support the association during the first years.

In 1998, the Office for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Education, under which the affairs of the State Broadcasting Service fall, established a joint committee on women and the news media to study the access by women to the news media and their participation in decisions regarding the development of the media. Also it should study which female and male images the news media present and how to work towards the media's coverage illustrate the life and work of women in all its variety. The committee, which was appointed for a one-year term, will present its report this fall.

The experimental project "Men of responsibility" started at the end of April in 1998. The project provides therapy to men who have used violence against their family. The project is an initiative of the Men's Committee of the Equal Status Council but is financially supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Social Security and the Icelandic Red Cross. The Icelandic Red Cross monitors the daily execution of the project while a special evaluation committee guides the progress of the project. The project is planned as an experiment for two years, but after that the committee will evaluate the project as a whole and its results.

The government of Iceland, in cooperation with the US government and the Nordic Council of Ministers, hosted a conference on "Women and Democracy at the Dawn of the New Millennium" in October 1999. The participating countries were the Nordic countries, the United States, Russia and the Baltic states. The two main themes were politics and economy. For further details see <http://www.womenanddemocracy.com>.

- b. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs coordinates the preparations for Iceland's participation in international conferences and their follow up. The Ministry has regular contacts with other Ministries and has established a committee with representatives from all the other ministries for consultations. Information on international conferences is thus reported directly to other Ministries. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs also cooperates with the Icelandic Office for Human Rights regarding participation in global conferences.

c. Measures by NOGs

Non-governmental organizations, both the general organizations of women and the women's rights organizations, and the organizations of the labor market, to give a few examples, are involved in all levels of the BPA, ranging from the preparation and formulation of the BPA to its adjustment to the conditions in Iceland. This work has resulted in various debates and efforts by the organizations, including newsletters,

special meetings on the BPA and its importance for the equal status struggle in Iceland, as well as generating the organization of conferences.

It should be mentioned that the Icelandic Womens Right Association (KRFÍ) and UNIFEM in Iceland had representatives in the Icelandic delegation at the BPA. The KRFÍ also organized the participation of Icelandic associations (NOGs) in a Forum which was held in Huarío parallel with the BPA. The government offered grants for participants. Most of the NOGs which did have representatives at the BPA or participated in the meeting in Huarío have worked on following up the BPA resolutions/conventions.

A good example of an initiative taken by NGOs after the approval of BPA is an extensive effort on gender equality within the Iceland Sports Federation. In addition to appointing an equal status committee, the sports movement is preparing a gender equality program focusing on gender mainstreaming in sports nation-wide. In North Iceland a very interesting project, an education center, is taking place at the initiative of a few NOGs. The center encourages women to attend various practical courses including a course in strengthening women's self-esteem.

The initiative of the NGOs in Iceland is first and foremost entailed in their participation in the formulation of a national policy on the implementation of the BPA, and in exercising pressure against the national authorities on the general honoring of the time limits set in the Government's Plan of Action for Gender Equality 1998-2002.

## **Part Three**

### **Implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action**

- A. Innovative policies, programs, projects and good practices**
- B. Obstacles encountered**
- C. Commitments to further action and initiatives**

#### **1. Women and poverty.**

Among the governments objectives is to review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty and develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty. Emphasis is placed on Articles 58.b and h, 60.c. 68.a and b in the Platform for Action (PFA).

## 2. Education and training of women

The governments policy is to work for improvements in the educational system, guide its execution and see to it that enough capital and labor force is available. Special emphasis is placed on Article 84 in the PFA.

The Ministry of Education is responsible to alert those involved in education and training at all levels to the importance of nonstereotyped roles of women and men, of sharing responsibilities and of the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making progress. It is also responsible to encourage girls and women to develop all their potential skills in view of their full participation in political, economic, social and cultural life. This has been done by the allocation of grants from the Primary-School Development Fund during the school year 1998-1999, where a special emphasis was placed on the development programs relating to education about gender equality and on measures to improve the position of boys and girls at school. The Ministry has also emphasized the need for schools to take firm measures to ensure the equal rights of boys and girls, educate the students on the status of the genders, and work against the students becoming stuck in the conventional models of the genders' work division, for example, by encouraging women to obtain a certain kind of education and men another. The Ministry has over the years been in collaboration with the Equal Status Council. It can also be pointed out that the Ministry has recently finished work regarding a new national curriculum, which emphasizes the different needs and status of girls and boys. It is planned that the curriculum be implemented over a three-year period starting in the autumn of 1999.

The Office for Gender Equality and the National Centre for Educational Materials have decided to publish a manual on gender equality for teachers and other school staff. An editorial board has been appointed, and two authors have been engaged. Publication is planned early in 2000. Following that, educational programs will be organized for school staff.

According to the Ministry of Fisheries a committee will be established to accumulate information on the situation in the fish processing industry in terms of women's employment opportunities, and also on the effects of new technology within this field and the resulting employment opportunities. The committee will be requested to obtain information about the education of the women working in fish processing, their social standing, etc., in order to facilitate an evaluation of their opportunities for job training and re-education.

In connection to unemployment of women, a cooperation between an equal status counselor and the regional employment office in the North (w. div.) has resulted in an experimental project, an educational workshop which is funded by the Unemployment Insurance Fund. A group of women is studying in the area, but they have gone through a job search process with a regional employment office. A great emphasis is placed on building up confidence and initiative. Besides that there are offered courses in languages, art and computers. Solutions which are just intended for unemployed women are also available in the educational workshop. The purpose of



this workshop is to make women more qualified and active in job searching and on the labor market, so they will have the possibility to get a long term job or go on to further studies.

### **3. Women and health**

The government's policy is to increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and good quality health care, information and related services, undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues and promote research and disseminate information on women's health. Emphasis is placed on Articles 92, 96, 100, 101, 104, 106.f, q. and v., 108. i., 109.b., c., d. and k. in the PFA.

The report of the committee on future policy in health affairs will contain proposals on a future policy in health affairs, based on the different needs and circumstances of the sexes.

The standard statistics in the social security system are gender specified in areas where this is technically possible. Work will commence on such specifying being applied to all information.

The special campaign on preventive measures against narcotic and tobacco usage will focus on the view that the reason for smoking by women and girls, on the one hand, and men and boys, on the other hand, are different. An effort will be made on projecting propaganda and education to young girls in particular.

The execution of the regulations that apply in the EEA on research of pharmaceutical products (GCP) will be ensured in Iceland to show full consideration for their effects on women and men.

In the spring of 1995 the Minister of Health and Social Security appointed a committee on women's health, whose brief is to explore changes in women's health, and submit proposals for improvement. The committee has already carried out extensive collection of data, held conferences around the country, and published material on women's health. The committee has submitted a final report to the Minister of Health and Social Security. A detailed proposal on various fields provides that a special project team will be appointed to begin work at once on the implementation of the proposals.

### **4. Violence against women**

The objective of the government is to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women and study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures. Special emphasis is placed on Articles 112, 113.a., b. and c., 117, 118, 119, 120, 123, 124.a., d., g., h., k. and o., 125.g., h. and j., 126.a., b. and c., 129.a., b. and c in the PFA.

Three committees were appointed under the umbrella of the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs to work on different parts regarding treatment of violence against women; one dealt with necessary amendments to legislation, another with improved treatment at the stage of police investigation and the third with reform in the judicial system. The committees handed in their reports in April 1998. They were sent to the legal procedure committee and the criminal procedure committee after they had been introduced for the national government in May 1998. At the same time the Ministries of Social Affairs, Health and Education were asked to consider the results of the committees and to decide how to execute their proposals. This assignment is still in progress.

A new Act concerning the state treasury's compensations to victims of a crime has been enacted. This was a work of a committee which was appointed by the Minister of Justice. The same committee is now working on a revision of the criminal law.

Last spring a big judicial relief was given by amendments to the criminal procedure law. These amendments regard better access to the investigation process and the victim's right to free counsel.

The experimental project "Men of responsibility" started in the end of April 1998. The project provides therapy to men who have used violence against their family. The project is an initiative of the Men's Committee of the Equal Status Council but is financially supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Security and the Icelandic Red Cross. The Icelandic Red Cross monitors the daily execution of the project while a special evaluation committee guides the progress of the project. The project is planned as an experiment for two years. After that the committee will evaluate the project as a whole and its results.

Additionally, the Ministry of Social Affairs will promote the formulation of a program or the presentation of a parliamentary bill with the objective of eliminating sexual harassment at the workplace and in school. The Administration of Occupational Safety and Health and the Office for Gender Equality investigated sexual harassment in the community, its nature and extent. The Minister of Social Affairs introduced a report together with these institutions which was published as a book in November 1998. The book's main topic is the research on sexual harassment in workplaces in 1996. There are also chapters on legal status and legal procedure in Iceland, the neighboring countries, the European Union and the International Labour Organizations. In addition it contains practical advice to employers, employees and victims of sexual harassment.

As stated in item 3 above, Women and health, a committee on women's health has recently submitted a final report to the Minister of Health and Social Security. The report covers the subject of women and violence, promulgating information that was given in the report of the Minister of Justice in 1996 on the causes, extent and consequences of domestic violence, and other violence against women and children.

The report indicates that domestic violence is a problem in Iceland, and that women who are subjected to violence make more use of the health service than others, that they use more sedatives and sleeping medications than others, and display many physical and mental symptoms which are attributable to violence. The report states that ways must be sought of assisting these women without handling them primarily as patients. The proposals in the report include that domestic violence should be classified as a health problem, and that special policy-making work be carried out with regard to the way the health service handles domestic violence. As stated in item 3 above, the proposal provides that a special project team will be appointed to begin work at once on the implementation of the proposals.

#### **5. Women and armed conflict**

The government policy in this field is to promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and to reduce the incidence of human rights abuses in conflict situations. Women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace must be promoted as well as providing assistance to refugee women, displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women. Emphasis is placed on Articles 133, 134, 136, 139, 140, 141, 144.a., b. and d. in the PFA.

#### **6. Women and the economy**

The government's objective is to promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources. Also to facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade, strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks, eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination. Special emphasis is placed on Articles 150, 165.c., d., g., h., j. and n., 166.a., b., d., g., h., i. and j., 167.a., b. and c., 169.a., 173.b, d., e., f., 174., 175.a., e., h. and i., 176.a., b., c., f., g., h., i. and j., 177.b., 178.d., e., f., g. and k. in the PFA.

According to the Icelandic government's four year plan of action, a committee will be appointed to present a proposal on a research project regarding the economic power of women and men, and on where such power is embedded in Icelandic society.

Following on from the findings of a wage survey published early in 1995, the Minister of Social Affairs appointed a working group to gather information and prepare recommendations on job evaluation in order to reduce wage differentials between women and men. The group completed its work by publishing a detailed report in May 1999 which contains guidelines on non-gender-specific job evaluation.

A three-year experimental project is taking place on special women's loan fund under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministries of Commerce and Industry, and Reykjavik City. A study will be made on a regular basis on the fund's objectives and focal points, as well as on how it serves the interests of women. The fund has supported women participation and innovation in industrial activity by

giving grant liability to applicants who apply for loan insurance from the Women's Loan Fund. The project will run for one more year.

Last March a Service Center for Originators and Companies (IMPRA), which service small and medium sized companies and originators was founded. Special support is given to women's businesses inside IMPRA.

Last April, an association of women in business was founded. The purpose of the association is to work for women's cooperation and to found a target group facing banks and lending institutions. Networking will be practiced under protection of the association. The government will support the association the first years.

It should be mentioned that the government of Iceland, in cooperation with the US government and the Nordic Council of Ministers, hosted a conference on "Women and Democracy at the Dawn of the New Millennium" in October 1999. The participating countries were the Nordic countries, the United States, Russia and the Baltic states.

The two main themes were politics and economy, and following are examples of the questions that were raised in the field of politics:

- What are the barriers women face when wishing to participate in politics/public decision-making?
- How can women overcome these barriers and what are the most effective methods to increase women's participation in politics/public decision-making?
- Why are women not elected/appointed to formal governmental or other decisionmaking positions? What strategies and structures can be developed to improve women's chances of running for office: getting elected; and increasing their staying-power once in office?

Questions in the field of economy:

- What are the challenges working women face?
- What strategic approaches can be adopted to deal with these challenges?
- What are the barriers women face when developing businesses and how can women overcome these barriers?

For further information on the conference see <http://www.womenanddemocracy.com>.

#### **7. Women in power and decision-making**

The government's policy is to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making and to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership. Particular emphasis is placed on Articles 182, 186, 190.i. and 192.b. in the PFA.

The Icelandic government's four-year action program on measures to promote gender equality for the period 1998 to 2002, has the objective of improving the status of women in various sectors of society by ensuring equal opportunities for women in

decision-making. Each ministry, for example, has agreed to conduct a study on the status of women and men who work in the relevant ministry or its institutions, and will prepare plans on improvements in areas where they are deemed as needed. Furthermore, each ministry has agreed on special measures to balance the percentage of the genders on the ministry's committees, boards and councils.

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The Minister of Industry and Commerce believes that the founding of the Association of Women in Business and by giving this special support to women's businesses by IMPRA, the number of women in business management will soon be higher.

The Office for Gender Equality has recently published a brochure on women and decision-making, including the participation of women on boards and committees in the social partners' organizations to encourage and support the efforts of social partners' organizations to promote balanced participation and women's nominations to public commissions and committees.

The Equal Status Council launched an effort during 1997 and 1998 in collaboration with the women's organisations of the political parties and two of Iceland's largest women's movements with the goal of increasing the number of women in municipal councils. Municipal elections took place in the spring 1998. This effort was first and foremost entailed in a series of meetings nation-wide and in writing articles in the newspapers. A report was prepared on the percentage of women in individual municipal councils in Iceland. The percentage of elected women rose from 25% to 29% in the elections. In the towns and in the capital city, Reykjavik, the percentage of women among the elected representatives was 32%.

In continuation of this, the Icelandic parliament, Althingi, resolved in 1998 to suggest to the government that a committee be appointed to adopt and monitor a strategic action plan to promote balanced participation.

The Minister of Social Affairs established a cross-party committee with a five-year remit to work on increasing women's participation in politics, for example, through education, advertising campaigns and publications. The members of the committee come from all the political parties in Iceland, the Office for Gender Equality and the Icelandic Women's Rights Association. A project manager (75% of a full position) was recruited in October 1998.

The committee on increasing the participation of women in politics has been active since October 1998. Among the committee's efforts, for example, is that it initiated an advertising campaign with the objective of making the general public aware of the need to increase women's participation in politics. The campaign attracted much public attention and led to increased discussions on women and politics during the parliamentary elections in spring 1999. A part of the campaign was the participation of the leaders of the political parties in illustrating that in many ways there are certain differences between the genders and that there are instances where they cannot undertake each other's roles. In light of this theme, an effort was made to illustrate that the genders are different in various ways and, therefore, it is imperative that parliament reflects society's gender ratio. Before this year's national elections, the committee also held open meetings in all the electoral districts to promote the theme of women increasing their participation in politics. The collaboration of the women's organizations within the political parties and the media was secured to ensure widespread dissemination of the committee's agenda.

An Icelandic female scholar is currently conducting comprehensive study on the status of women and men in politics, on the effects of the electoral system, the size of the electoral districts and how the methods of running for office affect the opportunities of women and men in political participation. The Office for Gender Equality is a partner to this study, which has also received grants from public research funds. A newly published book should also be mentioned, i.e., it was published by the Nordic Council of Ministers in Copenhagen. The title of the book is *Likestille demokratier? Kjøn og politikk i Norden (Equal Democracies? Gender and Politics in the Nordic Countries)*. In the book an attempt is made to study the status of the genders in the Nordic countries, how far these nations have gone towards the objective of gender equality, and to explain why women have made more progress in politics in the Nordic countries than women elsewhere. The book will presumably be available in English in the fall of 1999.

In promoting, supporting and encouraging initiatives and good practice, the Icelandic authorities have strengthened and called for measures to ensure balance of influence between women and men. Some have already been launched and others are pending. Conferences have been held for discussion on the power and influence of women. It should be mentioned in this respect that in the spring of 1996, a Nordic conference was held in Iceland on women, employment and economy. Various proposals were agreed upon at the conference and are currently being worked on under the Nordic umbrella. The Equal Status Council regularly holds national conventions, as stipulated by law, addressing, for example, the power and influence of women both in politics and the economy, and proposals are prepared and dispatched, among others, to the authorities and the members of the labor market. The aforementioned booklet on women and power in Iceland will also be published in English.

It should be mentioned that the government of Iceland, in cooperation with the US government and the Nordic Council of Ministers, hosted a conference on "Women and Democracy at the Dawn of the New Millennium", in October 1999. The

participating countries were the Nordic countries, the United States, Russia and the Baltic states. The two main themes were politics and economy. For further details see <http://www.womenanddemocracy.com>.

#### **8. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women**

The government policy is to integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programs and projects and generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation. Emphasis is placed on Articles 203.c. and f., 204.a. and d. and 207.a. and c. in the PFA.

To promote awareness raising of the general public (news media included) on the importance of the presentation of non-stereotypical images of women and men. One of the projects of the Equal Status Council and of the Office for Gender Equality is to provide companies, institutions and NGOs with advice in matters pertaining to gender equality, as well as making recommendations and suggestions on measures in areas where they are needed. Education in the form of a newsletter, educational booklets and lectures constitute a large part of the Equal Status Council and the office's activities.

#### **9. Human rights of women**

The government is to promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice and achieve legal literacy. Special emphasis is placed on Articles 210, 229, 232.i and m. and 233 in the PFA.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs will promote that international bodies like the United Nations and the Council of Europe especially study human rights violations aimed against women.

Under the umbrella of Ministry of Justice, courses on human rights, including and in particular the human rights of women, will be organized for officials. Course on human rights was held for judges in the fall of 1997 and 1998.

#### **10. Women and the media**

The government's policy is to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decisionmaking in and through the media and new technologies of communication. Also to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media. Emphasis is placed on Articles 236, 237, 238, 239.a., b. and c., 243.a., b., c., d., e. and f. in the PFA.

In 1998, the Office for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Education, under which the affairs of the State Broadcasting Service fall, established a joint committee on women and the news media. According to the committee's letter of appointment, the committee is requested to study the access by women to the news media and also to study their participation in decisions regarding the development of the media. A study should also be made on which female and male images the news media present and

how to work towards the media's coverage illustrate the life and work of women in all its variety. A policy formulation in this field should be based on the results of such studies.

During the nearly one year that has passed since this committee was established, the committee has collaborated with the Social Science Dept. of the University of Iceland in conducting two news media studies: a coverage analysis of the news media (newspapers and television) on the one hand, and an opinion poll among journalists and reporters, on the other hand. The first study is intended, among other things, to cast a light upon the prevailing gender images in the news media, whereas the second study concerns the prevailing work views and conventions at the news media with respect to the gender of the journalists and the reporters.

It is hoped that these two studies will provide a permanent foundation for a debate on the influence of the news media upon the gender-related views in society, both within the news media and in society itself. The committee, which was appointed for a one-year term, will present its report this fall. A decision will be made on the continuation and on grounds of the report, i.e., on whether the committee will be requested to follow up this basic work through the appropriate measures or whether other parties within the administrative system will be requested to do so.

#### **11. Women and the environment**

The government's policy is to involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels and to integrate gender concerns and perspectives into policies and programs for sustainable development. Special emphasis is placed on Articles 253.a, b. and c., 256.a., b., g., h. and i in the PFA.

The Ministry for the Environment has appointed an equal status committee consisting of representatives from the institutions that fall under the ministry's umbrella. A course will be held on equal rights in September 1999.

#### **12. The girl child**

The government's policy in this field is to put emphasize on Art 262, 263 and 268 in the PFA.

## **ANNEX II**

### **Common Data Sets/Indicators for Measuring Development Progress**

Detailed official statistics concerning the following information are published in *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998*, *Iceland in figures 1998*, *Women & men in Iceland 1997* and *Women and Men in the Nordic Countries 1999*. These books are appended to this report.



Population and fertility

- Population size,
- Population aged 0-4; 0-14; 15-49; 60+,
- Population by urban/rural distribution
- Population growth rate
- Total fertility rate
- Fertility rate for women aged 15-19

Reference is made to pages 30-47 and 64-67 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998*, pages 4-6 in *Iceland in figures 1998*, pages 2-4 in *Women & men in Iceland 1997* and page 4 in *Women and Men in the Nordic Countries 1999*.

Mortality

- Life expectancy at birth
- Infant mortality rate
- Under-five mortality rate
- Maternal mortality rate

Reference is made to p. 64 and 69 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998*, p. 5 and 7 in *Iceland in figures 1998*, p. 4-6 in *Women & men in Iceland 1997* and p. 4 in *Women and Men in the Nordic Countries 1999*.

Health

- Population with access to health services

Reference is made to p. 30 – 31 and 230 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998* and p. 27 in *Iceland in figures 1998*.  
(Everyone has an access to health services)

Reproductive health

- Contraceptive prevalence rate. (No data available, but an access to contraceptives is easy)
- % of births attended by trained health personnel
- HIV adult prevalence rate
- HIV prevalence in 15-24 year old pregnant women

Reference is made to p. 64 and 233 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998*.

Gender equality in education

- Ratio of boys in primary and secondary education combined
- Ratio of literate females to males at ages 15-24

Reference is made to p. 252-259 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998*, p. 28-29 in *Women & men in Iceland 1997* and p. 5 in *Women and Men in the Nordic Countries 1999*.

Economic activity

- Unemployment ratio
- Employment-population ratio
- % of labour force engaged in agriculture, industry, and services
- % of labour force by employment status
- % of children aged 10-14 who are working. (No data available)

Reference is made to p. 81-95 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998*, p. 8-9 in *Iceland in figures 1998*, p. 47 in *Women & men in Iceland 1997* and p. 6-10 in *Women and Men in the Nordic Countries 1999*.

Economy

- GNP
- GNP per capita
- GDP per capita

Reference is made to p.197-207 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998* and p. 3 and 24-26 in *Iceland in figures 1998*.

Income and poverty

- Household income per capita
- % of population below poverty-line. (Poverty-line not defined)
- Proportion of children under age 5 underweight. (Not measurable as an extensive pre-natal and child health care programs are operated by the health care centers.)

Reference is made to p.159, 175-179 and 242-245 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998*, p. 20 in *Iceland in figures 1998*, p. 48-56 in *Women & men in Iceland 1997* and p. 11-12 in *Women and Men in the Nordic Countries 1999*.

Education

- Adult literacy rate
- Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds
- Net primary enrolment ratio
- % reaching grade 5/completion of grade 4
- Net secondary enrolment ratio
- Average no. of years of schooling completed

Reference is made to p. 250-260 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998*, p. 28 in *Iceland in figures 1998*, p. 28-36 in *Women & men in Iceland 1997* and p. 5 in *Women and Men in the Nordic Countries 1999*.

#### Human security and social justice

- No. of victims of violence per 1000 people
- No. of persons in prison per 100,000 people

Reference is made to p. 246-249 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998*.

#### Housing and environment

- Floor area per person
- No. of persons per room excluding kitchen and bathroom
- % population with access to adequate sanitation
- % population with access to safe drinking water
- % population with access to electricity
- % population relying on traditional fuels for energy use
- Arable land per capita

All Icelanders have access to adequate sanitation, safe drinking water and electricity. In recent decades, geothermal energy has replaced imported oil for space heating, and now approximately 85% of all households are heated with geothermal energy. The remaining 15% of the space heating market is covered by electrical (12%) and oil (3%) heating. In 1995 the average size of dwelling units was about 130m<sup>2</sup> and medial usable living space per person was approximately 50m<sup>2</sup>.

Reference is also made to p. 21-22 and 116 in the *Statistical Yearbook of Iceland 1998* and p. 3 and 13 in *Iceland in figures 1998*.