



4 June 2012

Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

Declaration on the urgency of introducing legislation on sexual harassment in France

At its meeting in Paris on 4 June, the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination expressed great appreciation for the commitment made by the French authorities to make the introduction of a new law on sexual harassment a priority and to ensure that a bill is placed on the agenda of parliament at the earliest opportunity following the June parliamentary election.

While acknowledging that the provisions of the Labour Code relating to sexual harassment at work in the private sector as well as those of the Criminal Code on sexual aggression continue to apply, the Committee regretted the consequences of the repeal of the law on sexual harassment by the French Constitutional Council. This decision not only has deprived a great number of victims of a legal basis to seek redress against this specific form of violence but has also resulted in the immediate cancellation of all ongoing criminal proceedings, causing distress in the victims concerned and increasing the risk of impunity for the perpetrators.

The Committee also called on the French authorities to step up efforts towards the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), which was signed by France on 11 May 2011, as a sign of their commitment to eradicate violence against women and promote *de iure* and *de facto* gender equality. In any case, the French authorities should ensure that the new legislation on sexual harassment is fully in line with the Istanbul Convention.